

Italian Quarterly

4

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Italian Quarterly

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The First Year

With the present issue we complete one year of publication. We believed at the outset that the current interest in Italy was a permanent trend and not a passing fashion; the belief is now a conviction. The Italian Quarterly has tried to be one expression of that permanence and hopes to continue, in collaboration with its readers, to be so in the future.

In the short time since it began publication, the Italian Quarterly has tried to strike a balance between interpretation of the present and re-evaluation of the past; hence, we have presented articles on various aspects of Italian intellectual life, from economics to music, while at the same time attempting to bring into focus present-day trends and events. This has been made possible by the cordial relations the Editors have established with writers and publishers here and in Italy, relations we hope to broaden in the future. While outstanding publications and cultural events have been dealt with by the Editors and other contributors in the *Books* and *Items* sections, more general topics have been presented by such writers as René Wellek, Ignazio Silone, George H. Hilderbrand and Guido Calogero. New translations of texts by such classic authors as Dante and Machiavelli have been presented, as well as translations from such contemporary writers as Umberto Saba, Guido Piovene and Elio Vittorini.

The readers' collaboration and lively response have, during the past year, made the very continuance of the Italian Quarterly possible; indeed, they have surpassed all reasonable expectations for a review of this sort. The Italian Quarterly has materially depended on its patrons and subscribers, a fact which, in itself, is an indication of vivid interest. Needless to say, it is essential that this support be renewed. Besides, there is the matter of reaching all of our potential readers; in this vital effort, also, our present readers can be collaborators. With continuing success in this joint venture our future should be assured.

THE EDITORS

A full index of the first year will appear in issue number 5.



Conclusions of the Journey

by

GUIDO PIOVENE

[Born in Vicenza, Guido Piovene studied at Milan, where he was very close to G. A. Borgese, then a professor of Aesthetics at that University. His career as a fiction writer and a man of letters in the widest sense began very early, with a book of short stories vaguely *à la Proust*, titled *La vedova allegra* (1931) and with a varied journalistic and editorial activity. He was managing editor of the literary monthly *Pan* and soon joined the "third page" of the *Corriere della sera* to which he contributed until five years ago when he transferred his collaboration to *La Stampa* of Turin. The important part of his career as a fiction writer started with the publication in 1941 of the highly successful *Lettere di una novizia*, which renewed the classic form of the epistolary novel, while for its themes it could be partly related to the atmosphere of subtle religious preoccupation that seems typical of Piovene's native city (Vincenza was also the *patria* of Fogazzaro). The troubled years that followed are partly reflected in two novels written during and after the war, *Pietà contro pietà* and *I falsi redentori*. Meanwhile, Piovene has intensified his newspaper activity; the high literary quality of his writing coupled with a capacity for observation and synthesis both quick and profound has made him perhaps the major exponent of a type of cultured journalism which is one of the positive traditions of the Italian daily press. Outstanding examples are his reportages on the intellectual life of France, sent periodically from Paris where Piovene now resides most of the year, and the articles on a long American journey which were later collected in the book *De America* (1952). The latest product of this type is the long series of writings on an extended journey through Italy itself, recently collected in volume form (*Viaggio in Italia*, Milan: Mondadori, 1957). Piovene had granted long ago to the Editors of the *Italian Quarterly* permission to publish excerpts in English. American copyright difficulties have delayed until now—three months after the appearance of the book in Italy—the publication of the present chapter, which is the book's concluding section. This translation is published by kind permission of Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan, Italy.]

Italy is varied, not complex. It changes from mile to mile, not only in its landscape, but in the quality of its

spirit. It is a hodgepodge of tastes, customs, habits, traditions, languages, and racial heritages. These differences, however, are experienced as if existing in nature and give rise to quarrelsome dispositions and misunderstandings, but do not lead to detachment. There exists to a lesser degree a true spiritual complexity: currents of deep-rooted and incompatible opinions, static and opposed moral criteria, class conflicts aroused not only by temporary needs and interests but by moral values that try to cancel each other, by important religious differences. Ours is not a country of spiritual families, as is the case with France which in this respect is more tenaciously divided, but of the human individual. It is at the same time composite and simple. Any event whatsoever, any amusement whatsoever (this was evident in regard to a well-known television program), can gather around itself all of Italy at the same time. And ours is a people rich in the humblest and most mundane virtues, poor in those luminous virtues which require the moral, not the physical, sense of vastness and space, and admiration for intelligence and pride.

This explains why Italian unity, always declared precarious, has never been threatened. Not even a war of catastrophic outcome has seriously jeopardized it. But it was a question of unity above all passive, inasmuch as the Italians did not find within themselves motives sufficiently firm, serious, profound to provoke a break, such as those which separated England and Ireland. Furthermore, a little sentiment and a great deal of rhetoric lent a helping hand. But the same reasons which preserve physical unity are on the other hand a hindrance to moral unity which consists in association for a common end, and which requires a public conviction of being called upon to play an historical function as a people. In the presence of this kind of appeal, our unity has always shown itself much weaker than in defending its mere survival.

The present postwar period has initiated, or hastened, certain fundamental processes toward a more profound unity, and in my journey I have been able to gather indications of it. Unfortunately, they are accompanied by demagoguery, which is always ready to legitimize all centrifugal move-

ments. In some instances (the two islands, the Upper Adige, the Valley of Aosta, and Trieste in the future), the concession of regional autonomy is a wise decision. On the other hand, yielding to all the regional and municipal fantasies, multiplying the autonomous regions and provinces, is part of a careless political policy. Its only result is to weaken the State in favor of other forces which are foreign to it.

Yet the process of unification goes on, more vigorous than the mistakes. Two signs above all seem to be present. First, the emergence of Rome as the metropolis of both the North and the South, a meeting place, a fusion-point of all regional interests and characteristics. Secondly, the serious attempt to transform the South. A true unity of North and South cannot be achieved without raising the standard of living of the latter and without disseminating in it northern technology. A new industry in the South, a new oil well, are a further step toward spiritual unity. This today can be attained in the South without violence, and without opposing its character. The South presents real and serious problems, due to poverty and ignorance, but little spiritual resistance. Since the problem of the South is perhaps the principal one in Italy today, I must dwell at length upon it.

Traveling in the South today is an experience which cannot be repeated. Whoever may again, in not too many years, undertake this "journey through Italy," will find a different South not only in appearance but also in moral character. Today a dualism is emerging. The old South is generating a spirit different from its own. Degraded during the Kingdom, after having touched the bottom of its decadence with the war and the invasion, the old South is unable to offer anything other than an appearance of exhaustion. Not even those rooted to the habits of their own culture could wish to preserve it; it no longer has the strength to stay alive, especially since the civilization of which its deplorable aspects were the negative side, has become empty. Now that the transformation has begun, its urgency is more obvious than ever. This large mass of emigrants causes us to witness today an immense migration *in loco*.

Beneath the splendor of places, the natural gentleness

of the people and the last flickering of a civilization which was once great, one discovers abundant remains of the old torpid South tired of living with itself. If too long a list of "black" images of the South would today be tendentious, it is proper to recall a few, for no other reason than to remember that the transformation was inevitable. For example, the horrible House for the Aged in San Giovanni in Fiore, where the inmates, reduced to ghost-like appearance, sing in the stone hall over the crypt of a half-deserted abbey; some of the small towns, which I have described, along the Ionian coast, miserable and crowded, ancient and by now ageless, where the good nature of the inhabitants degenerates because of poverty into a misanthropic promiscuity, invidious sociability, reciprocal possessiveness unprompted by love, flocking together in order to sully one another, the desire to escape and at the same time the desire to watch one another so that no one might escape his fate. Then the begging. Billions of lire are spent in restoring cathedrals and old palaces. Tourist brochures speak of their beauty. They do not mention, however, that they often rise in the poorest districts and that the whole district crowds into them from morning till night. It is a kind of begging to which no one devotes himself individually, on occasions all do, and which therefore does not exclude a thousand other fixed occupations. You cross the square; you are suddenly surrounded by a crowd of people which seems to have appeared from nowhere. In the first row are the children, behind, in reserve, the adults, who help and encourage them. The small crowd accompanies the steps of the visitor, in mute contemplation, with wide and sorrowful eyes; it becomes larger as he advances; it surrounds him, engulfs him, and then it finds words, it pleads, it demands . . .

But the disenchantment of the old South with itself and, in many sections, the uprooting of people from the places where they were born, are even more striking than these visible images of desolation. In so many little towns in Calabria, in Lucania and elsewhere, the middle classes live with the feeling and attitude of permanent exiles. In every one of them one encounters a small number of people who, having succeeded in making the grade and in

seizing hold of public affairs, seem to be at peace with themselves. They are, usually, clear thinking men of exact intelligence. But around them mills the crowd of minor intellectuals, clear thinking and neurotic, because they have been unable to use their intelligence and their training. I have already mentioned in the book that they radiate a Chekhovian atmosphere. Everywhere is the expectation of a journey, a fortuitous encounter, which might bring liberation: the mirage of moving to a physical beyond, the North, a foreign country, where one may find happiness. At the same time the dull awareness that nothing will come, because opportunities are lacking, and because the spirit, bound to family tyranny, to fears of contamination, to habits born of degradation, would refuse to seize them. I have understood why so many of our intellectuals transplanted in large cities carry with them a legacy of neurosis.

This is true of the bourgeoisie, but even the lower classes are not exempt from it. Take the laborers who work in the region of Matera. They used to live in town and would cover every day up to ten kilometers going to the fields. At times they would stay in a room assigned to them by their employer near the place where they worked. In time they moved permanently into these places, taking their families there and losing touch with the town, without, however, being able to become part of the new community. The peasant without roots is an absurdity still common in the South. He lacks not only land of his own, but even land which may have ties for him. He is therefore a stranger everywhere, fluid, unrealized, larval. Polemists used to represent the South as an inferno; more often it was, rather, a limbo of available souls.

For this reason, in the book I have given little space to "Southern color." The advances in land reclamation, in the agrarian reform, in industry, in sanitary housing, will quickly do away with it. In many places I have noticed that these advances cannot be grafted onto the traditions bound to a dissolving civilization which no one any longer loves, rather it removes and replaces them. The local color of the South is disappearing and with it a certain paradigm of poetic civilization, a philosophy, a ritual of beliefs and

customs which seemed immutable: the pagan, semi-magic South. And this is the element on which the fanatics of folklore insist so much, unaware that more interesting than its vestiges is the rapid rhythm of its abolition. Particularly in the poorest sections it is volatilizing and losing faith in itself. Wherever it is really attacked it dissolves like foam penetrated by a stream of water. The more cultured now refuse to recognize themselves in the old mirror. Those writers and journalists who go South to find local color meet with little favor and are deemed liars. And such they are in fact, because although they describe partially a reality that drags along by inertia, they do not describe the new myth, the spiritual emigration of the whole South. The Sicilian politician for whom the main characteristic of Sicily of today is the ideal of being "less Arabian and more Norman," has given me perhaps the most appropriate definition.

Everyone may evaluate, with his criteria and his tastes, this liquidation of the classical and humanistic South. But it is inevitable. Whoever is attached to the South of our memories should hasten to visit it. He will travel among paradoxes, and indeed, even in my book the adjective "paradoxical" appears often. That South where nothing new happens and may appear decrepit to us, as soon as it is stimulated gives proof of an impressive vitality. The work of redemption which the government and the public conscience are today carrying out in the South are the best part of our postwar political policies, and our claim to honor. On the series of "black" images I have mentioned another series of contrasting images is superimposed; thus, it seems that one is looking at a film exposed twice in two different places. It is the building fever, with cities that double in size and new centers that burgeon; it is the new hotels (one finds better accommodations south of Rome than in some sections of the North), the beginnings of new industries, the offensive of agrarian reform, the cheerful farmhouses in lands until recently wild and unhealthy. It is those skyscrapers, those clothing stores, perfume shops, and house appliances stores which encroach upon a life of parsimony. My "Journey through Italy" has led me to see this change, from Pescara to Foggia and to Cosenza,

to the Ionian coast of Calabria, to Sicily where technical dreams take on the imaginative tinges of the island's character, to Sardinia, different from all the other regions because it sets the authentic primitivism of an untouched island against the decadence-renaissance of the real South. In many places one is reminded of a small scale Far West, of those American cities in which the head was formed before the body. The impact of a technical civilization shows even more clearly that the character of the South is not uniform, and here and there it gives rise to a native "Northernism." There are zones in which the inhabitants are already predisposed toward a civilization more technical than humanistic, even if in the past they did not have the opportunity to become aware of it. Wherever industry arises, minds and souls are changed.

A new South is thus forming upon the old South, and the old South, tired of itself, migrates into it. We witness a phenomenon not unlike that which occurred when the masses emigrated overseas. Today emigration is *in loco*. For the inhabitants of those towns in the South which they would all leave at the first sign if they could, without turning back, we must also provide a landing place in the country where they were born. Our South will be reborn when all those who are born there feel attached to their land by truer bonds than a few lifeless habits.

The South is on the move; but Italy, and not only a part of it, is today the most fluid nation in Europe. One hears it said that she is "static." Politicians and journalists accuse her of "immobilism." But those who speak of "immobilism" either do so because of bias, or because they rarely stick their heads out the door. This legend may arise from the manner, not very clear, orderly, or conscious, in which the changes are taking place. Italy is always a confused country, in which hardly anything appears in its true guise. But a journey through Italy brings us face to face with the most mobile, fluid, most destructive society of Europe. Our neighbor, France, is much more conservative. Its middle class, in its various strata, dominates the scene with its economic and cultural norms. In Italy, almost everywhere, one sees the old structures wearing thin and

crumbling away. In the South, naturally, it is more obvious. The old ruling class is reduced to a mere shadow. Deprived of part of its wealth, it is losing in even greater measure its political strength and its cultural prestige. Italy is accomplishing a muted revolution, achieved through an accumulation of empirical and disorderly compromises with a reality already established by fact. The petty bourgeoisie and the lower classes give it its predominant color, and bring to the fore their mentality and customs. Few other countries seem so little bound to their past. In no other country, would city and countryside be permitted to be assaulted and defaced according to the interests and whims of the day. Italians need not be afraid of being insufficiently "futurist." They are more so than the others without realizing it: although this does not always mean being more advanced.

Even the agrarian reform has been until now above all an instrument of impact to create a world of unforeseeable outcomes. It is difficult to separate with an accurate cut its merits from its defects. Transforming the land, building houses, bridges, roads, populating the countryside until recently deserted, settling the laborers and transients, indeed constitute a merit. Traveling through certain sections of the agrarian reform I have not disguised my admiration. However, the idea which inspires this vast undertaking seems questionable to me. One might ask if it is wise to rely on small land ownership when the economy inclines toward large companies, the peasants dream of security, the benefits of technology, and the ways of the city, and when increases in population quickly wipe out the effect of distribution. To believe that today a man is attracted by discomforts, the risk, the anxieties and the troubles of small land ownership is, in my opinion, a provincial myth. Furthermore, the agrarian reform appears as an ambiguous compromise between an idyllic-religious-conservative dream and a revolutionary dream; and hence it is attacked by both sides. It will succeed only if it is integrated into activities of another nature, particularly of industry, and if the divided land can be incorporated into larger and more organic entities. Sold now illegally (tomorrow openly) by spurious

peasants to real ones, the land will once again become concentrated in the hands of the more competent. But one point remains certain. Within the reform a class of landowners, different from the old and of peasant origin, is taking shape. The reform has shaken the old structures and has shattered them; it has given impetus to a movement which cannot be stopped, even if its conclusion will not necessarily be the one imagined by those who gave it the first push.

Changing in a confused, partly unconscious manner, but more rapidly than the other European nations, Italy, if left to its natural course, will not incline toward extreme adventures. A certain kind of adventure on the extreme right, already tried, is no longer possible. As for Italian communism, hinging not on the cities but on the changing rural districts and weighed down by a formless sub-proletariat, it lacks almost everywhere precision and honesty even in respect to itself. With its great variety Italy tends toward a uniform mixture. This is natural where opinions, distinctions, boundaries between one class and another, are weak and where everything is stirred together, forming, out of many colors, a sort of neutral color. The tone of Italy is given by a generic socialism (someone called it an everyman socialism) in which Marxist and evangelical, reformist and conservative elements come to the surface helter skelter. Christian reformism will for a long time retain a predominant role in it. We witness in today's Italy a repetition of the Counter-reformation, which was in fact called the Catholic Reformation. It was a movement which took over the demands promised by Protestantism, retaining the control for the Roman authority; thus carrying them out on a practical level but extracting the elements of protest, criticism of teaching and dogma, and the vengeance of the laity. Something similar is happening in respect to Marxism and to reform movements which pullulate among us even in the religious field. They develop on practical and activistic grounds, and they merge into that generic socialism I have mentioned above. I have heard, for example, the most extreme declarations concerning the end of middle-class ownership and the advent of peasant ownership, precisely in the Catholic circles of the agrarian reform. But the authorities are watch-

fullest practical reformism compromise the doctrines and the prerogatives of the law. This, on the other hand, satisfies the greatest majority of Italians, a people above all practical, and little inclined to become divided over ideas.

In general, the aspect of Italian life which left with me the best impressions is the economic aspect. The average standard of living is rising impressively. There are undoubtedly backward regions, tenacious unemployment, large masses of underprivileged. Poor and overpopulated, Italy has been drawn into the revolutionary movement of today's world immediately after a disaster. Hence the contrast between the exigencies of productivity, which increases wealth, and of social justice, which wants to divide it more equitably, is more dramatic than elsewhere. These demands are in continual conflict, diffusing an atmosphere of demagoguery. One must please all parties; hence the perpetual quarrel between politicians and producers. With all this, I sincerely believe that Italy is heading toward a period of average well-being, unless external events intervene. One of the tasks of political policy today is to give heart to Italians in this sense, by showing that our country is in a position to give work to all. Everywhere signs of its vitality are visible, of its readiness to respond when actually called upon. Everywhere it is evident that the means are available. If the Italians will resolutely carry out the sound plans already in existence, for industrial development, for full employment, for the diffusion of technical knowledge, for the redemption of the South, they need have no fear for the future.

What I have written so far implies both my positive and negative impressions. I should like now to dwell a bit longer on the negative. They may be summarized in two adjectives which I have been obliged to repeat: confused and unconscious. Italian reconstruction, as a sign of vitality and of the will to live, has amazed everyone. It often happens abroad that one hears the activity of our industrialists and farmers praised. The prestige of Italian intelligence is, on the other hand, meager, and its capacity for diffusion is modest. The panorama of Italy is that of an active country, whose actions remain in the dark. Italy seen from this perspective seems to offer as its own only the voices of

Catholic integralism transported into the political field, and the anachronistic dispute between clericals and laymen. For this reason such a large part of Italian intelligence is forced to waste itself on problems that elsewhere have been solved long ago, and which therefore seem provincial and backward. Our country is not inferior to any other in regard to the number of keen minds or the quality of native intelligence. But this intelligence rarely succeeds in acquiring a political value or prestige, and rarely utters words that capture universal interest. In no other country as in ours does the whole field seem to be occupied by all sorts of "activists." In no other country, as if by tacit agreement between business men and sociologists, is the conviction so deeply rooted that only problems of money and food are important. I remember the speech of a director of the agrarian reform whom I heard during my trip. He had discovered during digging operations the remnants of a city, of a cemetery, of a temple, he did not know which. And he did not know which, he added with a sly smile, because he immediately had it covered with concrete lest a superintendent for the Ministry of Arts should hold up his operations. The Art superintendent seemed in his words a comical personage, born to hinder social progress and the unfolding of history. This mentality is unfortunately widespread.

Social transformation is accompanied in Italy by a cultural lowering greater than in other countries of equal civilization. It is one of the effects of the corrosion of the weak lay state which, born of the Risorgimento, was drawn into successive historical processes before it could prepare for them a secure heritage. The causes, as everyone knows, are poverty, the presence of masses foreign to the interests of the State, the numerical strength of the parties which want its disintegration in order to substitute for it a lay state of a different kind, and also the limited and ambiguous loyalty of a part of its defenders. Still, its defense is not in opposition to the ideal of a greater fatherland and to political policies on a supernational basis. It is rather a matter of making the Italian community fit to enter Europe and of finding there a worthy place.

So that there may be no misunderstanding, I shall state that I am not a "secularist." It was precisely the Catholic Church that, by furnishing a degree of understanding among men of heterogeneous tendencies and interests, allowed the Italian State, in the last few years to preserve at least its physical existence. The evil lies not in a political policy marked by religious feelings, which could be the great goal of today's world. The evil begins only when clergymen take the place of laymen, either directly or through intermediaries in those matters in which only a layman is competent, for the reason that he can believe in them, namely: the administration of public resources, the defense of culture, and the protection of the law. Religious integralism cannot set great store by the profane world, that realm of the flesh which also encompasses the wisdom of men and their warring philosophies. Faced by this profane world, it tends to behave in one of two ways: it will paternally sustain it on daily and gratuitous alms which have never changed anything, or it will utilize it as a *corpus vile*. Thus, whoever jeopardizes the existence of an industry, forcing it to transform itself into a paternal charitable institution for supporting the needy, is adopting, at times unawares, the same criterion as those who, for good or ill, consider public funds a hunting preserve. The lofty charity of the former lends a hand to the dark schemes of the latter. The destroyed state is replaced by a vacuum in which appetites run rampant. Furthermore, by depriving the state of its spiritual prerogatives one achieves an unforeseen effect: the country falls into pure "vitalism," into crass physicality.

The twenty years of fascism still weigh upon Italian intelligence, limiting its freedom. The disaster that followed them has left in its wake too many dogmas, too many taboos. Everywhere in other countries, men whose democratic qualities are beyond doubt discuss today the very basis of our democracy. In Italy, instead, a great deal of political thought is hampered by the heritage of the struggle, and shackled by moral prohibitions. Our newspapers exhibit perhaps greater intelligence than foreign papers, but it is discursive intelligence. Looking closely at them we notice that they avoid fundamental problems and rest upon dogmas.

The journals of ideas, besides having little public repercussion, have few contributors in Italy.

The major instrument of which the European countries can avail themselves to assert their worth is their ancient culture. Our political leaders do not seem to be convinced of this. Italy, through its schools, through its institutes of research, and through its cultural representatives abroad, shows most obviously an aspect of poverty. Those same cultural representatives abroad, furthermore, are never thought important enough to be taken seriously in policy-making. Only in certain instances, if vanity is at stake, ministers, diplomats, deputies, will appear on the foreign scene in the guise of men of culture, and they are not always the best suited.

The risk Italy runs is to become a nation of inferior culture, since it is possible to be intelligent and have an inferior culture. A French Catholic said to me sometime ago that Italy lacks "metaphysical hopes" while it is rich in practical hopes. We should like to see an Italy in which "Christian hope" were indeed a metaphysical hope, above unconstrained vicissitudes of experience and thought.

All this applies, of course, if Italy aspires, as a people of superior culture, to play an active role in the thought and history of today. In fact, when seen from a less ambitious point of view, the panorama of Italy can be encouraging. Thanks to its reconstruction, Italy is now more respected than formerly. It achieves greater respect by working quietly, with little fanfare, rarely appearing in the headlines of foreign newspapers. What I have noticed in Rome is happening in all of Italy. From a semi-provincial town, in any case strictly Italian, Rome has become a true international metropolis, as soon as it stopped calling itself "imperial." In the same way, Italy has been given the opportunity of becoming a great nation once it stopped being what in the old-fashioned languages of the chancelleries is called a "Great Power." This terrible poison, the concept and the pride of the Great Power, which renders those subject to it obtuse and incapable of clarity, and which in the world of today can be suicidal, no longer troubles us. Among the major virtues, our people have shown that they possess at least one:

clarity, the strength to accept the truth and to call defeat by its proper name, the ability to renounce the capricious desire to dominate which convulses the life of other nations. By setting in order our own house, by adding together all the minor advantages which sometimes richer peoples are unable to utilize, at the very moment when elsewhere apathy is becoming widespread, we have shown ourselves to be good Europeans and we have staked a just claim to a certain moral prestige among people forced to sustain the weight of dubious victories. Within the European community the community of Italy can achieve a place which it has perhaps never had since its unification, provided that it does not deteriorate into a coarse vitalism, into greedy politicking or into intellectual defeatism.

This is the conclusion of a journey during which I have seen so many hopes arise from centuries of sweat, of misery, of weary acceptance of a harsh life. It would be sad if the upsurge of Italy in the post-war period were to be carried to the point of falling into too petty an interpretation of the *primum vivere*.

Translated by Carlo L. Golino

Pirandello in Retrospect

by

RENATO POGGIOLI

[The stage is set for a revival of Pirandello: it is clearer now than before that his plays are not mere vehicles for ideas, mere expressions of ingenuity, but actually representations of intricate human relationships modulated in an intensely dramatic form and expressed in a natural yet eloquent stage speech. It is time, also, for a wider recognition of the importance of Pirandello's non-dramatic works and of their intimate relation to his plays. In this essay, Renato Poggioli helps us, as it were, to stand back, to see Pirandello not only in retrospect but also in prospect, in other words he presents us with an "historical" view of the man and his career and also suggests how our future views and discoveries may flourish.

Professor Poggioli, who teaches literature at Harvard University, ranges in interest and competence from the Steppes to the Great Plains. Some of his essays on Russian literature have recently appeared (*The Phoenix and the Spider*); his version of Wallace Stevens is well known in Italy; he has even managed, in a recent very learned journal, to vivify with new insight so familiar a text as the Paolo and Francesca episode. The present essay is another instance of both his range and concentration.]

During the period between the end of the last century and the first World War, two great Italian novelists, and one of them undoubtedly the greatest, were islanders: the Sicilian, Giovanni Verga, and Grazia Deledda from Sardinia. While the best known authors of their generation were striving, often in vain, to approximate universality either by withdrawing from life entirely or by offering their readers refined and frequently false quintessences of life, Verga and Deledda achieved universality almost without conscious effort, by turning toward what to others seemed too humble and restricted a form of existence.

Those who wished to ape Europe or Paris succeeded in being merely provincial. But these two writers, each of whom had no thought but for his own island, amply as-

sented his full right to enter into the temple of *Weltliteratur*. They had encompassed universal values by stressing their own regionalism. In evangelical terms, we may say that they entered heaven along the straight and narrow path.

Of the two binomials Deledda-Sardinia and Verga-Sicily, the second is of greater interest to us now, not on account of Verga's superiority, but because Pirandello, with whom we are concerned, stems from Verga and Sicily.

D. H. Lawrence helps us to clarify the origins of Pirandello who is Verga's spiritual son and a Sicilian too, for Lawrence knew both Sicily, where he lived for a while, and Verga's writings. He decided to translate Verga and published two volumes of the Italian's short stories in English, as well as the great novel *Mastro Don Gesualdo*. For this last work Lawrence wrote an introduction which remained unpublished until after his death. In it we see that Lawrence was still under the influence of the great Russians, and he used the impression created by that contact to make us understand, by contrast, the Sicilian soul and the art of Verga.

. . . In *Mastro Don Gesualdo* you have the very antithesis of what you get in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Anything more un-Russian than Verga it would be hard to imagine, save Homer. Yet Verga has the same sort of pity as the Russians. And, with the Russians, he is a realist. He won't have heroes, nor appeals to gods above or below. The Sicilians of today are supposed to be the nearest thing to the classic Greek that is left to us; that is, they are the nearest descendants on the earth.

In order further to emphasize the relationship between Verga and Pirandello delineated above, I shall quote the testimonial of the French critic, Benjamin Crémieux, who once stated that "Pirandello's humoristic subject begins where the naturalistic subject of Verga ends." Actually, it is in Pirandello's social and moral experience rather than in his art that Crémieux's statement is true, for Pirandello's Sicilians are no longer ancient Greeks, but modern men. They no longer belong to the generations which could recall the rule of the Bourbons, as did the characters of *I Malavoglia*; they are citizens of the Kingdom of Italy.

They are no longer peasants or shepherds or men from distant farms, but the inhabitants of villages or small provincial towns. In short, from Verga's pastoral world we are taken to the world of the petit bourgeois, from the shepherd's crook and the nomadic life to the pen and the table of sedentary people, whether they dwell in Palermo, the island's metropolis, or in Rome, the capital.

Verga's shepherds and Pirandello's petit bourgeois represent the artistic synthesis of two contrasting generations, or more accurately, the historical and social evolution of Sicily during the last sixty years. In part, Pirandello's task consisted in pointing up the psychological changes brought about by the transition from country to province, from the simple, almost feudal relationship between citizen and State. Pirandello traces the course from a life of innocent ignorance to that of a sad awareness. In other words, the playwright aimed at showing that the Sicilians felt rising within them those terrible diseases designated by Lawrence as "intellect" and "soul."

Though Verga's Sicilians were, indeed, deprived of a consciously developed intellect, we must admit that they too possessed a soul of sorts. Thus we cannot push the critical game of paradox to its logical conclusion. Verga's heroes, immersed in the flow of events, are idyllic spirits, epic and tragic at times, but without drama, without history. Unlike Pirandello's description of his own heroes, their souls do not watch themselves live, but are simply *souls that live*. Pirandello's heroes, too, will let themselves be swept along by the current, but they are directed not by the laws of nature but by those of society, conscious that their time is no longer reckoned by the agricultural calendar of the seasons, but by the bureaucratic time-table of a daily servitude.

Something similar to the phenomenon that had taken place among the Sicilians of Verga's generation, transforming them into the Sicilians of Pirandello's, took place also among the inhabitants of another island, Corsica. As soon as it became a part of the French nation, this island gave its most adventurous sons to the administration of France and her Empire. From a pastoral idyll, praised even by

Rousseau who at one time cherished a dream of becoming the Moses of the Corsican people, its inhabitants had turned to a life of action. Since Buonaparte, every Corsican leaves the island, not with a dream, but with a Napoleonic program.

Sicily fulfilled a more useful, though less brilliant, role. After sending her strongest sons to America, she detailed the remaining share of her human crop to the administration of the Italian nation, but, unlike Corsica in its relation to France, Sicily has given Italy great writers and remarkable philosophers, as well as statesmen.

Sicilian emigration to America and the continent had, for a long time, the same effect on the social life of the island that the steady pursuit of a new frontier toward the Far West had had in the history of the United States. But finally, the Sicilians too found their California, and not at the extreme border, but at the very heart of their island. Unmerciful Nature suddenly proved that even volcanoes and geological catastrophes may be in some way useful. It revealed to the islanders their own volcanic and phosphorescent gold, sulphur. The Sicilians knew they owned sulphur, but had never realized that it could be turned into gold. The beginnings of a primitive industry had already been noted by Verga who, after the *Malavoglia*, gave us *Mastro Don Gesualdo*. At that time the self-made men of the new industry began to appear in Sicily. In fact, the two men who were to become Pirandello's father and father-in-law were among the owners of sulphur mines.

This social evolution is artistically evidenced in a synthetic way, and not by analysis, in Pirandello's early works. We shall point to those evidences, not as to simple historical documentation, but as to indications of the real nature of Pirandello's art, too often regarded as abstraction or cerebral fancy. Aside from the literary experience terminating with Verga, Pirandello's starting point was also, I repeat, a new social and moral experience that Verga had barely discerned. Crémieux wisely warns the readers and critics to remember this "realistic, experimental and unideological basis of the art and thought of Pirandello."

In one of Verga's short stories, *La Roba* (Property),

the author describes the vast tracts of land owned by Don Mazzarò, an illiterate peasant, who has become rich through toil and sacrifice. Wherever one went, one learned that the surrounding land belonged to Don Mazzarò. Verga remarks, with epic humour: "It seemed that Don Mazzarò was spread out as wide as the surface of the earth, and that we were walking on his belly." Don Mazzarò, in grabbing as much land as possible, was not motivated by covetousness or avarice, but by the impulse which moves others to the conquest of love or power. His pride of acquisition was of such purity that he submerged his own identity in the object conquered: "After all, he did not care for money; he said it was not real property and as soon as he had accumulated a certain sum, he bought land. He wanted to own as much land as the king and be even better off than the king, who can neither sell it nor call it his own." Mazzarò's feeling for property is that of a primitive man, part patriarch, part pioneer. The fact that he does not consider money as wealth shows that he still belonged to that social pre-history when the conception of *homo oeconomicus* had still to be evolved.

Let us consider now one of Pirandello's short stories which he later developed into a one-act play of the same name, *La Giara* (The Jar). The hero, Don Lollo, could be Don Mazzarò's brother. He too loves the land and, like Don Mazzarò, oversees the peasants who are lazy and negligent in their work. He treats them badly, punishes them whether or not it is warranted. One day, Don Lollo buys a large jar which is to hold the surplus oil expected from a bumper crop of olives. The jar is enormous, and Don Lollo is so proud and jealous of it that he forbids anyone to touch it for fear that it might be broken. Suddenly some peasants discover that the jar is cracked. At first, Don Lollo is infuriated, but then he becomes resigned to having it repaired by Don Zima, who is expert at this kind of work. Don Zima has invented a magic putty which, according to him, will make the jar as good as new, with no trace of a crack. But Don Lollo insists that he repair it the old way by stapling the parts together with wire. Protesting, Don Zima obeys. He climbs into the jar to mend it from within and

when he wants to get out, he realizes that the neck of the jar is too narrow for his shoulders. At the sight of Don Zima, imprisoned in the jar much as Jonah was in the whale, Don Lollo is once more infuriated. He feels that this is an entirely new situation, an "interesting case," to use legal jargon. Rather than set Don Zima free, he sends for a lawyer.

The lawyer advises Don Lollo to free Don Zima, in other words, to break the jar again; otherwise, Lollo will be guilty, by definition of law, of sequestration of person. Don Lollo concurs, but points out that it is Don Zima's own fault that he has been caught inside the jar. The lawyer's judgment is worthy of Solomon; he decrees that Don Lollo is to break the jar and Don Zima is to pay for it. Don Zima objects that the jar is worthless, first, because he found it broken, and secondly, because Don Lollo insisted that it be repaired in his own way. The lawyer then decides that Don Lollo must break the jar and Don Zima pay a third of its value. Don Lollo gives in, but Don Zima refuses to pay and prefers to remain in the jar until Don Lollo changes his mind. Don Lollo goes off in a fury, but Don Zima gaily sends for some wine and settles down to joking with the peasants dancing about his prison. Don Lollo, finally seeing that they are making fun of him, rushes down in a rage and kicks the jar to pieces amid the laughter of the peasants and a bellow of triumph from Don Zima.

What is the difference between the worlds of Don Mazzarò and Don Lollo? Don Mazzarò conceives of property as a relationship between men and things, a struggle between man and nature. Don Lollo, instead, regards it as a relationship between men and society, a contest between man and man, a right that can be conferred or removed by law. He conceives of the law, not as an expression of justice, but as the sanction or denial of a privilege. He plays the law against the law to maintain or to defend a privilege, to enforce the subordination or even the humiliation of a rival, of a competitor, in other words, of a peer. Don Zima, in order to oppose Don Lollo's legalism, falls back on obstructionism and crawls into the jar, like a snail into its shell. From this haven, he proves to his adversary that

the law may be a blunted weapon, a useless instrument. In literary terms, we may say that we have passed from the epic, austere world of Verga into an ironic, dramatic world; or, in sociological terms, from a primitive, patriarchal society, into the world of bourgeois civilization. We have passed from an old feudalism which maintained itself by the law of violence to a new feudalism which defends itself by the violence of the law. And at least sometimes the law is defeated and broken into as many pieces as the fragments of the jar.

Pirandello describes this world with a malicious smile which lurks, like Don Zima, at the very bottom of the jar. From there the author smiles unnoticed at Don Zima, but mostly at Don Lollo and the lawyer. On closer observation, however, Pirandello's position is revealed as not too different from that of the lawyer, who listens to the argument rather indifferently. That indifference is a sceptical reflection on the law of which he is the representative and interpreter. Pirandello, in his turn, smiles because he realizes that men always act like puppets, whether they be moved by the strings of instinctive passion or by those of the indirect and repressed emotions which burgeon beyond the pale of the law.

The true discovery in the short story *The Jar* is that law is not a rule which tends to discipline and check the strife between men but is, of itself, a new instrument for strife. Pirandello took the legal and social battle symbolized by the Sicilian Don Lollo as a point of departure and from that battle he later evolved the eternal dissent, not between man and man, but in the very soul of man with man himself. Thus a new dissension was revealed, of which the author was to give us further proofs in deeper and richer personalities.

From Verga's final position, which was a return toward the simple, Pirandello moved in the opposite direction toward the heterogeneous and complex. Although his goal was different, Pirandello's itinerary coincided, in direction at least, with that of so many men from his island who abandoned the white houses of the Sicilian countryside for the uniform gray beehives of the capital. In this hostile world,

Pirandello's Sicilians defend themselves with dialectics, as did those of Verga with a knife.

The really important word is *dialectic*. Contrary to what his father probably wished him to do, Pirandello did not choose a law career, a career considered by simple minds both useful and dignified, like the army or the priesthood. He chose, instead, to follow the road of literature and culture, not as a journalist or amateur, but seriously, as a philologist and a scholar. He went from the University of Rome to that of Bonn in Germany, where he graduated as a Doctor of Philosophy with highest honors. In his final dissertation, Pirandello had reconciled the love of his island with the love of science in a work of scholarly research on the systematic and historical phonetics of the dialect of Girgenti, his province. In Germany, he continued to write poetry and began to read the classics of philosophy. Perhaps it was at that time that the shadows of abstract ideas and the romantic seeds of modern thought began to take shape in his southern soul.

Although written much later, a true synthesis *a posteriori*, *The Jar* appears to us today a symbol of his awakening consciousness. Between his experiences of the period and his new studies, there was the same transition, we might say, that there is between legal and pragmatic dialectics and pure oratory. Yet Pirandello, the student of philosophy, as well as Pirandello the artist, was always to retain a little of the wrangling dialectic of Don Lollo. That scepticism which was later to form the basis of his logic was to lead that same logic to the most abstract and general conclusions. But the force which had first started that scepticism in motion will always be the force that the heroes of the master, Verga, left as inheritance in the souls of the Sicilians portrayed by his disciple, Pirandello. That force is the instinctive suspicion felt by every simple soul when faced with official justice and its instruments, that is to say, the police, courts, judges, and official documents, and the suspicion felt toward that very justice which is, in the final analysis, governmental authority.

The shadow of law and government power is present in Verga's stories too, but it remains in the background.

In most of Verga's tales, the predominant passion is not a desire for possession, but for love. If the instinct for possession finds in man's law or in nature's catastrophe its own sentence (earthquakes, landslides, floods like the one which was to inundate the sulphur mine of Pirandello's father and to destroy his wealth), then too the violent and volcanic instinct of love carries in itself its own implicit punishment, jealousy. However, in almost every instance, the instinct for possession as well as that of love, is dominated and checked, despite its strong compulsion, by a supreme law, a noble and unyielding moral code, the code of honor. The Malavoglia family does not suffer and work in order to get rich, but in order to pay back its debts, to win back public esteem. In *Cavalleria Rusticana* the rustic duel is fought to erase with blood the wound inflicted on honor. Everybody knows the subject of *Cavalleria Rusticana*. It is one of Verga's many short stories, which, according to Lawrence are, "one after the other, stories of cruel killings . . . it seems almost too much, too crude, too violent, too much a question of mere brutes." As a matter of fact, the judgment is unjust. Turiddu is not a brute; nor is Alfio. Both are men of sensitive and even honorable nature. Turiddu knows he is wrong and would even let himself be killed, he says, "but for the thought of his old mother . . ." When Alfio discovers that Turiddu is his wife's lover, he challenges him to a duel without harsh words and with an extreme moderation of gesture. Turiddu accepts the challenge, thoughtfully, almost silently, with only a nod and a half-phrase. Their instinctive and primitive self-mastery acquires a character of epic spontaneity and dignity when compared to the sophisticated elegance of a "gentleman" in an affair of honor. And they tread, not with the heavy step of a peasant or a carter, but softly, like shadows, to their death or to inflict death for love and honor.

The same eternal theme of adultery and jealousy is the theme of Pirandello's comedy *Il berretto a sonagli* (Cap and Bells), and of the short story from which it grew. But here we see enormous changes at the very outset and in every detail. In Verga's tale the villagers witness, in a respectful and stern silence, the scandal and drama unfold-

ing before their eyes. Blood and sin are matters too grave to be the subject of much conversation, but the crux of Pirandello's plot is gossip. It is through slander that Beatrice, the wife of Mr. Fiorica, learns that her husband is carrying on an intrigue with the wife of one of his clerks, a humble book-keeper, Ciampa. During the latter's absence, arranged by Beatrice herself, she has his house raided by the police and the lovers are caught, but not precisely in a compromising situation. Ciampa returns just in time to witness the outburst of scandal. Poor Ciampa had known that his wife had been unfaithful to him for years but he had always pretended to be unaware of it and by this feigned ignorance, which made him the object of universal pity, he had provided himself with a mask of respectability. Once the scandal becomes public knowledge and everyone is aware that his wife's unfaithfulness can no longer be unknown to him, Ciampa finds himself cornered and faced with two alternatives: the primitive law of honor and vengeance, or the supine acceptance of the accomplished fact and the consequent dishonor. Unlike Compar Alfio, Ciampa hesitates before bloodshed, but his extreme awareness of society prevents him from choosing the second alternative.

Then, in a moment of brilliant lucidity, he decides to exploit Beatrice's jealousy which, though justified, is so morbid and exaggerated that it carries her to the verge of insanity. With this to work on, he convinces the wretched heroes of the petty scandal that the only solution lies in establishing Beatrice's insanity and in asserting that, in her insanity, she has taken for fact something that was but a figment of her imagination. With devilish ability, carried by suggestion and logic to the very verge of absurdity, Ciampa succeeds in convincing everybody that Beatrice is mad and that she must be sent to an asylum. Thus, instead of Ciampa being forced to wear the mask of dishonor, it is Beatrice who is forced to wear on her head the cap and bells of folly.

The vulgar knife as an instrument of honor and revenge is here replaced by a sharper and deadlier instrument, the razor-blade of logic, so keen and sharp as to split a hair. Before we examine the development of this new use of logic

as an arm of defense and of vital offense, as it was to become in subsequent compositions, let us first review some of the most original and significant of Pirandello's works.

First of all, let me emphasize the author's originality. The assertion that Pirandello derives from Shaw, from the Scandinavian writers, or even from the Russians, is mistaken. The preceding pages are a sufficient proof, but let me add in confirmation that Shaw himself has dubbed *Six Characters* the most original play ever written. The predominant motive in Ibsen's work is the heroic struggle against reality of man following the flag of the ideal. In Pirandello's work, there is room neither for ideal nor ideology. As regards the Russians, one may even say that Pirandello at least once stepped ahead of one of their greatest writers, Leo Tolstoy, who acknowledged that the theme of his play *The Living Corpse* was inspired by the Russian translation of *The Late Mattia Pascal*. There is always something personal and characteristic in Pirandello's art, that is to say, the experience of the Southern Italian faced with the more disciplined and modern life of Central and Northern Italy. As Crémieux cleverly pointed out, "even when he is away from his island, Pirandello, the quiet Sicilian, enjoys observing the follies of his compatriots." Accordingly, the writer's best work is that in which the principal motive is the description of the "follies of his compatriots," namely, the series of tales in which the background is formed by the experiences of the Sicilians who crossed to the "continent," that is, to Italy proper. It is these tales which will authorize the future reader to place Pirandello in the same category as the greatest Italian fiction writers: Boccaccio, Manzoni and Verga. At present, for lack of space, I can consider only three of his recognized masterpieces, a novel and two dramas: *The Late Mattia Pascal*, *Henry IV*, and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

Il fu Mattia Pascal, published in 1904, was written under strange circumstances. Hard pressed for money, Pirandello had sold it before it was written to the literary journal *La Nuova Antologia*, and the whole book was composed with one chapter already at the printer's, the next in

the process of composition, and the third in his mind. He did not know himself what the ending would be, yet the novel presents great artistic coherence.

Mattia Pascal, a librarian in a small provincial town, is tormented by an unbearable family life and by constant bickering with his wife and mother-in-law. Following an angry scene, Pascal flees from his home, intending to return after a short period of escape. However, he reads by chance in a newspaper that the corpse of a drowned man, recovered from a near-by river, has been identified as himself, presumably a suicide, since he had been missing from his home for several days. Mattia Pascal decides to take advantage of this opportunity to start life afresh. He then assumes the name of Adriano Meis and, after winning a small fortune at gambling, and having wandered about freely for a time, decides to settle down in Rome. Subsequently, his landlord's daughter falls in love with him and one of his fellow-guests steals his money. Suddenly Meis realizes that he is completely beyond the pale of society. He can neither marry the girl nor denounce the robber, because Adriano Meis never existed and Mattia Pascal exists no more. In order to revive Mattia Pascal, Adriano Meis must be killed by means of a second pretended suicide. Meis gives way to the resurrected Pascal and decides to return home. But here he is faced with another surprise. His wife, thinking herself a widow, had re-married and has now a child by her second husband. The story ends with the tragic and grotesque impression created by this new trick of life.

Benedetto Croce, who did not like the novel, ironically described its plot and meaning as the "victory of the legal state." But Pascal's drama lies precisely in this and arises from the initial chapters, that is to say, from the normal life Pascal led before the pretended suicide and his transformation into Adriano Meis. The vulgar episode of his wedding, the haunting description of his daily life, the hypocrisy of the friend who after Mattia's supposed death marries his wife, all make us conscious of the potential unfaithfulness in wife and friend alike. By a trick of fate their union

will, after a legally proved widowhood, become legal unfaithfulness blessed by the marriage tie. Actually, they betray only Mattia's memory. The blindness of life and destiny makes possible what might have been prevented by social prejudice. The final, grotesque surprise for the revived Mattia Pascal appears to us a revelation of the secrets of the human soul. The euphoria of the transformation into Adriano Meis does not last long and the episode of his winning at the gaming table, is not, as many have thought, a *deus ex machina*, a trick devised in order to continue the course of events. It is, instead, a symbol of the chance happenings characterizing the hero's existence. In a world so little heroic as Pirandello's, where there is no place even for practical will power apart from heroic efforts, events can be directed only by chance.

Mattia Pascal's adventure proves the impossibility of escaping society, or proves that at most it might be possible in case a man succeeded in changing himself into a nonentity, into that passive witness of life represented by Adriano Meis before sorrow and love stirred him again. Mattia Pascal, guilty of no crime, since he did not even pretend his own suicide, experiences the life of an outlaw, of an escaped convict, with his flights from town to town, his changing of clothes, his altering of features, of personal papers and name. This is the very essence of Pirandello's thought. He wants us to realize that society regards as a criminal or as a "living corpse" all who escape from her bosom and that it is impossible, therefore, to evade the tyranny of the legal state. The strength of this novel lies in the odyssey of that impossible escape which offers only two alternatives: either no social or vital living, or a return to prison. The irony of fate leaves Mattia to close the cycle of his adventures with a combination of the two solutions: return to a prison where there is no place for him.

The *Late Mattia Pascal* is a novel, but the two other recognized masterpieces of Pirandello are plays. Before examining them, let us discuss the problem of the late revelation of the author's playwriting ability which has puzzled many biographers and critics.

From the time he went to live in Rome, Pirandello's life seemed to fall into three main divisions. The first phase consisted in a calm family life, relatively independent, from a financial point of view, and marked by his continued activity as a writer who had great difficulty in finding readers, publishers and critics. During the second phase, following the loss of his father's entire fortune, Pirandello was forced into the teaching profession and was chained to his literary labors, while he suffered from the first manifestations of unjustified jealousy on the part of his wife. The third phase coincided with the War, the recognized insanity of his wife, and the beginning of his career as a playwright. These three phases, corresponding to the crescendo of a crisis, were followed by the beginnings of fame and success which were to last from 1920 until his death. The more important events of the last period were the founding of the Teatro d'Arte, Pirandello's successes on the stages of Paris, London, New York and Berlin, and finally, shortly before his death, the "official" recognition of the Nobel Prize. The mysterious delay in the assertion of Pirandello's theatrical vocation has been explained by G. A. Borgese in terms of the scruples of an *erudito* and a scholar who mistrusted the noisy, ephemeral glories of the stage, and whose taste did not run to the modernistic extremes of the drama and stage direction of the time, despite all contrary appearances. This estimate is partly true. Like all conscientious Italian writers, Pirandello had begun as a classic poet by translating the Roman Elegies of Goethe and imitating them in his own *Elegie renane*. But in reality Pirandello started to write comedies, dramas or tragedies only when his interest in the intellectual elements, for logic and emotion and their contradictions, began to haunt him. And we should not forget the personal and human element which caused this change of trend and form. The beginning of his dramatic career coincides with the height of his psychological and personal crisis when, through daily experience, he saw in his wife's mind all human, vital logic replaced by the logic of insanity.

The theme of *Enrico IV* is, specifically, the relationship between logic and insanity. The events preceding the tragedy are narrated with great virtuosity in the opening scenes

and consist in a strange and terrible incident. Many years earlier, for a pageant on horse-back, a rich young gentleman had dressed as Henry IV, Emperor of Germany, and the woman he loved had apparelled herself as the Countess Matilde of Tuscany, ally of the Pope in his victorious fight against the Emperor. A man named Belcredi who was also in love with the woman had startled his rival's horse. In the fall, the young man had landed on the back of his head and, as a consequence, had become insane. The madness, by a trick of fate, had imprisoned him forever in that moment of masquerade and illusion. From that time on, he had earnestly believed himself to be Henry IV. His relatives had wanted to satisfy all the whims of his insanity and had him live in a medieval castle surrounded by servants dressed in historical costumes who, in order to obtain their positions, were required to learn the history of the German Empire during the 11th and 12th centuries by heart.

With amazing ability, Pirandello keeps us waiting for Henry IV's entrance until late in the first act. He prepares for it by a slow, provocative succession of recitals of the preceding facts, dialogues and humorous scenes like those which point out the contrast between the electric bulbs in the outside hall, the servants smoking cigarettes surreptitiously, and the medieval costumes and historical speeches of the rôles they recite. One day the woman who had taken part in the pageant as Matilde arrives at the castle. She is accompanied by her daughter, Frida, and her lover, Belcredi, who had caused Henry IV's insanity, and a psychiatrist. The four together decide on a last attempt to cure the poor madman and, on the doctor's advice, they dress up in medieval costumes. Frida, who resembles greatly her mother when young, is to appear suddenly before Henry IV dressed as Matilde, so as to restore to his mind, which had stopped like a broken clock, the sense of time, of the contrast between past and present. While they are preparing for the execution of this trick, we witness an even greater surprise. Henry IV reveals that he is no longer insane. A few years before he had suddenly become cured but, realizing that he could no longer take his place in real life, he had decided to continue to act the same rôle. When Frida appears dressed

as Matilde, the shock makes him dizzy. The resemblance with the woman he has once loved makes him dream for a moment that the past can be revived. But when the trick is discovered, in a desperate attempt to grab the life which has already run by him, he tries to kidnap Frida. Belcredi intervenes, but Henry kills him with his sword. Then, in order to save himself, he reenters immediately the world of fiction, to put on again, and this time forever, the mask of Henry IV.

From this résumé one may think that the play *Henry IV* is based entirely on capriciousness. But the element which erases this impression is the extraordinary ability of the playwright and, above all, the great words formulated by an extremely keen intelligence which produce, by their depth, a sustained emotion. The audience has the feeling that nothing is impossible in this fourth dimension within which Pirandello's thought and imagination move. Nietzsche said there are "unreal" truths, Unamuno said there are "arbitrary truths." Here Pirandello shows us one or some of these truths.

The occurrence which forms the basis of *Henry IV* is quite credible, I should say, natural, because it springs from a vision which is at once foresight and imagination. Henry IV is Pirandello's own thought transformed not into flesh and blood, but into tears and nerves. "Every speech he utters," writes a British critic, Walter Starkie, "contains words of profound wisdom and there are some critics who call him the Hamlet of the 20th Century." The specialists in Shakespeare assure us that there is no Hamletism in Hamlet, and that Hamletism is a later invention of the imaginative critics and romantic poets. But we are right in asserting that there is Hamletism in *Henry IV* even if it is born long after the Prince of Denmark. Very seldom could Pirandello rid himself of the limitations of the world in which he was living as successfully as in this drama. No one has ever realized here the presence of another element, the negation of history that has become masquerade, myth, real madness.

Whether the works we have examined up to now or those we are about to study convince us of Pirandello's originality,

the study of his sources is substantial proof. *The Late Mattia Pascal* may have derived from *La morte civile* (Civil Death), a mediocre melodrama of the end of the century, while *Henry IV* reminds us of Hamlet's great example. *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (Six Characters in Search of an Author) belongs to that series of plays about the theatre written by men of the theatre which includes such masterpieces as *Il teatro comico* by Goldoni, or *The Critic*, by Sheridan, and resumes the old Elizabethan and Shakespearean motif known as the "play within a play." But in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* the old formulae of the "play about the stage" and of the "play within a play" are enlarged beyond the restricting limits of caricature or make-believe, to become revelations of the obscure ties which bind imagination to reality, or in Goethe's words, bind "truth" to "poetry."

We see a bare stage, during the rehearsal of a play. The rehearsal is a failure and makes the manager furious and the actors impatient. Suddenly six persons appear on the stage: the Father, the Mother, the Stepdaughter, the Stepson and two children. They are six real, living creatures who want to act the tragic-comedy of their existence. The manager starts to drive them out but then decides to exploit this *tranche de vie* to his own profit. The Father, in telling their story, says that the four younger people are not his children. The wife had deserted him and had had them by another man. One day the Father met the Stepdaughter in a house of prostitution, where they recognized each other only by chance and just in time. The Stepdaughter confirms the episode but does not explain it in shame like the Father, but rather with contempt and disgust. The Father frees himself of reproach by saying that all men are sinners in the most shameful way, but that they conceal their shame under the mask of respectability, and proceed indifferently by pretending that nothing really has happened, only because they have buried all recollection in their subconscious. The Father's tragedy lies in the fact that he was discovered by his stepdaughter. He had been marked forever by the stamp of shame, catalogued forever under that label, or rather, since a label can always be torn away, branded with a

more lasting identification, because a man who has once been caught on the hook of scandal will never be able to free himself.

The manager is impressed with the story and wants his actors to recite it immediately and spontaneously. But the six characters protest that they want an author who will understand them, and not actors who will betray their meaning. No one knows but they themselves what has happened and how it should be presented. The manager and the actors must give them a free hand. While the Father and the Stepdaughter are acting their own scene, a shot is heard. The Stepson, a timid and silent adolescent, had killed himself backstage to escape forever from the shame weighing on his family. While the confusion, the sorrow and the terror of the actors becomes hysterical, the curtain comes down, giving us the feeling that, rather than the shot itself, the only *deus ex machina* capable of terminating this story is the curtain.

In this drama, the interplay of art and irony unfolds at the same time against three different backgrounds: the background of life, the background of art, and that of the theatre. The six characters are first of all human beings, then characters, and lastly, interpreters. As human beings they judge themselves and others. But the Father's judgment is directed by humbleness and pity, while in the Daughter's judgment there is only rebellion and disgust. In the Mother, humbleness and pity have become passive submission, but in the Stepson they have been transformed into the will for self-destruction.

As characters, they speak a philosophical and polemic language. This latter form is probably meant for the men of letters and the Italian audience of those years, and it advises them to remember that real life is bare and gray and sorrow is a serious, every-day matter. Writers should not waste time in the fireworks of rhetoric. Audiences should not expect from the theatre only vulgarity and happy endings. The philosophical advice has a larger scope and tells us that the great writer must remain in some way subordinate to his characters. A great writer always hides behind his

characters like God behind his creatures. A great writer never gives a personification aroused by the contemplation of his own ego, or by the infinite reflections of his own image, as seen in a maze of mirrors. The artist must follow the examples of life and nature which create without affixing their own signatures or branding with their stamp the infinite objects they produce from shapeless matter, from true nothingness. Here is what Pirandello says in the foreword to the first edition of this play: "Nature uses instruments of human phantasy in order to achieve her high creative purpose. A character in a play comes to life just as a tree, as water, as a butterfly, as a woman . . . And he who has the fortune to be born a character can afford to jeer even at death, for he will never die . . . Who was Sancho Panza? Who was Don Abbondio? And yet they live on eternally as pulsating beings, just because they had the fortune to find a fertilizing womb . . ." This is why the characters cry out at all times: "We want to live . . . The drama is in us . . . We are the drama, and we are eager to act it; our inner passion drives us to this."

In d'Annunzio's art, as in all aestheticism, the center of the art is the poet, the artist himself, while the center of Croce's thought is the artistic and literary work itself, and often not as a whole, but in the rare elegance and cleverness of a stanza or of a page. But in Pirandello's aesthetics, the center of art lies beyond the artist, beyond his work. It lies in what makes him the rival of nature and equal to man, the life-giver. It is in his own characters, in the eternally alive, human personifications which the artist gives humanity as an everlasting token of himself.

And we now arrive at the third background, that of the relationship between drama and stage, between art and interpretation, between imagination and conventionality. Here, too, Pirandello presents a double-faced attitude. First, he smiles ironically at the professional vanity of the actors and at their poor ability to understand the lessons of life and the hidden purpose of the author. But his more indulgent attitude is that of the experienced playwright who knows that all interpretations or performances, even the most noble

and serious, are still unfaithful to the truth, to the essence of his work. As regards this fact, Pirandello, in a note to the second edition, expressed all his pride as a creator and perhaps also the resentment of the poet toward his interpreters when he defined the six characters as "more real and consistent than the voluble actors."

The razor-sharp logic of *Cap and Bells* has become, in *Six Characters*, the lancet of the surgeon who is vivisectioning himself, a sort of X-ray which throws light on the anatomical secrets, the very skeleton of the imagination. Now that we have seen it in the extreme forms it has reached in Pirandello's works, we must know how Pirandello conceived that logic which was perhaps his only Muse.

One of the characters explains it to the heroine of *Ma non è una cosa seria* (But It Is Not Serious): "Do you know what logic is? Well, imagine a kind of filter pump. The pump is here. (He points to his head). It stretches down to the heart. Suppose that you have an emotion in your heart. The mechanism which is called logic will then pump it for you and filter it; then that feeling at once loses its heat, its muddiness; it rolls upward and becomes purified—in a word, it becomes idealized and flows wonderfully well, because, I tell you, we are outside life, in abstraction. Life exists where there is muddiness and heat, and where there is no logic. Do you understand? Does it seem logical that you should weep now? It is human." While we see here logic replaced by sentiment, often it is logic which replaces sentiment, that is to say, the two elements alternate in active and passive position. To Pirandello, man's life is but a parasitic symbiosis of logic and sentiment.

How did he reach that symbiosis, how did logic become a vital element to such an intellectually simple man as Ciampa? Of, if we take the image used for the hero of *Cap and Bells*, how did we pass from the logic of the ancients, which worked like a sword or a plough, to this razor-blade logic?

Logic, or reason, according to the classics of philosophy, had always had a universal value, equally valid for

each *individual of the human race*. By this universality, reason had acquired a transcendental essence. The Encyclopedists and the Illuminists adored it with the same faith that they ridiculed, as evidence of moral disease or a product of ignorance, in the believers in positivistic religions. Their spiritual children, the Jacobins, dreamed at the height of the Terror, of making of reason a goddess.

Pirandello does not believe in reason as an absolute and transcendental value. Since he sees logic everywhere, he cannot consider it an eternal and superior value. Between him and the theologians of reason lie romantic thought and modern relativism. At the most, he considers it as a social function. It may render the social life of man easier (or more complicated), but it will never be the basis of a moral code.

Man knows and feels that logic and reason are not beyond, but within himself. He realizes their existence only by introspection. He exploits them without having much respect for them. He uses them to defend himself against others and, above all, against himself, as well as to assert his own personality, to give color and taste to his interior life. He considers them, at the same time, the justification and the instrument of his happiness.

For the "modern" man, therefore, reason is a practical activity or, if the term did not sound contradictory, a sentimental activity. But to the "ancients" it was a moral, rather than a practical guide. For Kant, universality of reason is the basis of the categorical imperative of the conscience, which teaches man to direct his actions according to a principle that might become a universal rule. Socrates teaches the same truth. For Kant and Socrates, reason determines the action, guides the will, gives a general and moral sanction to the work of the individual.

From this classic rationalism determining morality, we have reached modern rationalism (which some dissenting critic may call intellectualism) of which Pirandello is one of the greatest interpreters. Actually, in his work logic is only a reasoning machine which spins its wheels in the void, or

turns them without gaining ground, eroding and sharpening itself in a continuous, useless attrition.

The machine which is out of order in Pirandello's world, a world equally dominated by logic and instinct, is the will. In his characters, logic has become a second nature, another instinct. When Pirandello was narrating his life to his future biographer, he said he had been born in the country, near a wood that the Sicilians, in Biblical style, had named Chaos. Not only had he been born, but he lived, thought and worked in chaos, because chaos signifies a universe regulated neither by man nor by God, a cosmic jungle where the will either does not exist or cannot operate.

The chaotic nature of reason, undisciplined by any law, the slave to the whims of instinct, and like it, bound by the vain, strenuous pursuit of happiness, is the predominant motif of Pirandello's works. Very few critics have realized this fact. Most of them have stopped at that point where reason itself, in the futility of its search, becomes the cause of unhappiness.

In the first place, logic attempts to furnish the individual with the weapons he needs in his fight against society. Its first duty is to provide man with social respectability. Before it becomes the source of individual illusions, logic is to be regarded as a machine rationalizing what every man conceals deep in his subconscious because, according to society's judgment, it is shameful or mean. But man, by acting his social role, comes to believe it to be real and often confuses the mask he wears with his real features. Logic has become a true logic of the irrational. The romantics and the analytical novelists had already written of the "logic of passions," or to use another romantic phrase, the logic which through the constant supply of a vital warmth becomes the "eloquence of the passions."

Dialectic and eloquence, the latter the body and clothing of the first, are terms which occur frequently in a discussion of Pirandello. Reason always attempts to convince others or itself. Recalling the image of the unfortunate lawyer of *The Jar*, we see that in Pirandello the unfortunate man is his own lawyer, now defending, now accusing him-

self, often doing both with such detachment as to regard himself a legal case. Pirandello's characters do nothing but accuse or defend themselves before a hypothetical tribunal. When their dialectic reaches the level of confession, we see Pirandello in his greatest and most human light, and all sophism disappears in a yearning for purification. But even then the confession of his characters does not resemble that of a guilty man or of a sinner who is elated by the humiliation of an act of mystic contrition, as happens in the great Russian novels. They are not inspired by God, but by an obscure fatality to which they are subject. In this sense, the writer who resembles Pirandello most is Franz Kafka who is haunted by the life of the conscience, not as a confession, but as a ceaseless trial.

The "demon" of logic and reason in Pirandello is much more powerful and diverse than is the intelligent, indulgent one Socrates heard within himself, in whose advice he found the inspiration of truth and the words for explaining it. It is not a demon, as understood by the Greeks, but the devil himself, as conceived by Christianity. The Evil One who does not convince, but seduces; the Serpent of the Garden of Evil, the one who called sin the tree of knowledge. Pirandello's demon belongs to the same race as the demon in Dante's *Inferno*, who fights with an angel for the soul of a sinner. He succeeds finally in winning it with brief, brilliant reasoning and then says to the angel, with an ironic smile: "Thou didst not think I possessed such logic."

In the lucid, sceptical spirit of Pirandello, whom thought and imagination had led beyond the circle of his father's faith, this conception of intellectual guilt is a profound reminiscence of Christianity. Original sin is the corruption of the conscience. It is the sin of pride; from it arises some of the greatness and all of the misery of man. The Christian considers it sin and describes it. For Pirandello, it is sin transformed into sorrow and therefore he regards it with mixed pity and horror. But in the face of the nobility which every human sorrow arouses, the pity in Pirandello's world overcomes the horror. As long as the struggle between pity and horror continues, we have the Pirandello

of comedy and farce, humorous and grotesque. But when pity wins the battle, his art substitutes for the comic mask of buffoonery the severe and solemn mask of tragedy. Then the teaching of the poet who may seem one of the most cruel and violent critics of humanity rings out like the evangelical words: "Judge not."

All the sadder and more profound characters appearing in his works seem to repeat those great words. They no longer seem Catholic, because they rebel against being judged and condemned for eternity according to their "deeds." Even Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who regarded the Calvinistic conception of grace as a convenient spiritual alibi, refused to be judged according to his deeds. His narcissism led him to believe that man can be saved by the mystic merits of his personality, if he possess a sensitive soul, satisfied with the peaceful contemplation and adoration of itself. In this doctrine, that very pride constitutes election and predestination. It is, in short, a new idolatry.

However, Pirandello's man not only rebels against being judged according to his deeds: he does not even want to be judged for the real or apparent virtues of his soul. He knows that his feelings and thoughts are just as weak and subject to the same slavery as his body. While Rousseau's man seems to say: "Forgive us our sins and love our soul," Pirandello's man whispers, cries out and repeats: "Judge us not. There is nothing in us worth saving!" When he is not swept on by the flow of sentiment, Pirandello's man feels his soul, his intelligence and his body overwhelmed by an absolute, unique feeling of shame.

Most of the time, Pirandello's characters try vainly to fight it. Sometimes they reveal it cruelly in the souls and lives of their fellowmen. Sometimes they bare it in themselves with such great sincerity that it seems like immodesty. The feeling of shame dominates them because of the instinct of modesty which is still strong and deep in their nature, as it was in the soul of Verga's Sicilians. Pirandello shows that moral modesty is similar to physical modesty. "Each of us, sir," the Father tells the Manager

in *Six Characters*, "in society, before the others, is clothed in dignity." The moral and social logic proves that the soul, too, possesses a body, a body it must conceal. The garment which hides the body of the soul is falsehood. But shame or life almost always destroys this mask. There lies the tragedy of existence which inspired Pirandello with the paradoxical and meaningful title under which he has gathered together the body of his dramatic works, *Naked Masks*. This idea of mask and of nakedness has always tormented his imagination and is manifest in other titles, such as "Life in its Nakedness" and "Clothe the Naked." The lack of physical modesty and the unexpected half-nakedness have been permanent elements of vulgar humor from the earlier farces to modern pochades. But from these offences done to modesty Pirandello has drawn all the grotesque, tragi-comic play of his humor, symbolized by the hook which the Father in *Six Characters* describes. In his Stepdaughter's eyes, the Father will always remain caught on the hook, as Dostoevsky would say, of "an obscene episode:" "She then insists on attaching to me a reality which I could never expect to assume for her in a fleeting, shameful moment of my life." He will console himself with the fact that, in her eyes, he has lost forever social honor, the reason for life, or what the hero of another play of the same title calls "the pleasure of respectability."

The Father of *Six Characters* is one of Pirandello's many creations who, in the ceaseless process of living, defend themselves by denying the judge the right to condemn them. They seem to be telling him: Either you are one of us, and therefore you cannot condemn us or, if you are different, you cannot understand nor judge us. Anyhow, you could not condemn a soul or a life eternally because of one cheap and vulgar incident. "A fact," Pirandello says elsewhere, "is like a sack which will not stand up when it is empty. In order to make it stand up, we must put into it the reason and sentiment which caused it to exist." An artist may possibly discover the sentiments and reason which impart the essence and the value to a given fact, but a judge never. The judge looks on the accused or guilty man as an individual, that is, as something integral and

permanent. Pirandello and his characters, instead, are perpetually haunted by the many and fleeting aspects of personality. Under the disintegrating force of logic and life, the human personality dissolves into a sort of atmospheric dust, filled with countless grains and atoms now disappearing into the shade, now revealed in different colours and vibrations in response to the particular sunray which falls on them. In Pirandello's own words, man is at the same time "One, No One, and a Hundred Thousand."

Borgese was the first critic who contrasted Leibnitz's idea of the monad with Pirandello's conception of the infinite divisibility of personality. We can extend the comparison still further and assert that Pirandello does not believe in pre-established harmony, but in a pre-established dis-harmony.

But this profound mistrust in the harmony of life, this basic doubt which is a fundamental of Pirandello's art, is not the doubt of a Mephistopheles which denies all human values. Pirandello's characters arrive at the denial of all truth only because they are pursuing, anxiously and desperately, *the* truth. Although his art often reveals the humorous or the grotesque, it is never cynical or damning, but almost always pathetic and tragic. For this reason, Starkie's likening of Pirandello to Dean Swift is not sound.

The fundamental austerity of his spirit withstands even the difficult trial of the obscene elements in his works. In some, for example in *Man, Beast and Virtue* or even in *Liola*, the plot revives situations found in the old Italian short stories from Boccaccio to Bandello, or in the plays of the 16th century from Aretino to Bibbiena. But Pirandello emphasizes the humorous element in such a way as to give the impression that the good-natured licentiousness of the classics has been contaminated or vulgarized by the "gags" of the commedia dell'arte. As in Machiavelli's *Mandragola*, the saraband of the passions is not observed with any kind indulgence, but with a detached clarity which actually becomes disgust and contempt. By presenting this aspect of the exciting, shameful adventure in the intricate jungle of consciousness and instinct, the author of the *Novelle per un anno*

may be considered the author of *The Thousand and One Nights* of the modern soul. Similarly, the complicated, mysterious plots of the longer stories and of the *novelle* read like the countless installments of a serial murder story of the subconscious.

Because it is a continuous process of argument and questioning, Pirandello's style seems like the faithful transcription of thought born and evolved only to be expressed orally. Like lava, it is shaped by internal fire. Pirandello the writer is at times nothing but the feverish stenographer of a rapid, violent voice dictating to him from within himself and he seeks to reproduce its constant crescendo, its reticences and pauses, its interjections of surprise and doubt. Because of this oral element, Pirandello's thought does not proceed by synthesis, but by syncopes, and that explains the frequency of pauses and dashes on his pages.

The balance between dialogue and narration weighs in favor of the second, in his novels and short stories as well as in his plays. The brief moments of pure action develop much as in a moving picture (Pirandello showed some curiosity and mistrust toward this new art in his novel *Si gira*), but the core of the story or novel is the meditation which either proceeds or follows the action. The drama is nothing but dialogue. According to Valéry, rhyme and verse are the exclusive characters of poetry. For Pirandello, the alternate beats of conversation and arguments become more important than the speakers and assume the real rôles of protagonist and antagonist. Thus Pirandello reminds us that, as etymology teaches, dialogue and dialectics are one and the same word.

The conversational bent of his imagination is revealed in his titles. Almost always they have the quality of an interruption, of a proverb used to silence or finish off one's opponent, or of a bitter and wise "last word" offered by a sceptical spirit as advice or admonition: *All For The Best*; *Each in His Own Way*; *Each of Us His Own Part*; *Think It Over, Giacomino*; *Right You Are, If You Think You Are*; *As You Desire Me*; *We Do Not Know How*; *But It Is Not Serious*; *Same as Before, Perhaps Better*; and so on.

The inquiring nature of his inspiration endows his writing with a constant spirit of research, not scientific or chemical research, but the magic, vain seeking of the alchemist for the philosopher's stone. It is in this constant moving from formulae to experience, in the intertwining of hypothesis and supposition that his thought assumes a tortuous pattern suggesting to Starkie his clever reference to Hamlet's remark: "All is oblique," and which reminds us also of Ibsen's myth in *Peer Gynt*, "The great curved one."

In Pirandello's world, life and death become true theatrical climaxes, taking the form of human reactions to biological catastrophes. Truly biological is that conception which envisages man in a continuous process of transformation and destruction of an infinite number of spiritual cells, this process either stimulated by the germs of logic, or destroyed by its microbes. This associative and disassociative nature of intelligence also continuously creates and destroys the ties between man and man, "Men gather together only to fight," says one of the heroes of *La nuova colonia* (The New Colony), an imaginative drama about the founding of a new Utopian town by a group of outlaws. In this play, the complete failure of the enterprise proves that the religion of the group (of the masses) is destroyed by a spirit which does not even believe in the religion of the individual.

The idea that there can be no progress, deriving unquestionably from Catholic doctrine, is deeply rooted in the Italian spirit. Christian progress is individual, but it has meaning and form only in God, that is, beyond the earthly life. Before Baudelaire, Giacomo Leopardi had ironically praised "magnificent, progressive destinies." Pirandello understands life as a succession of rises and falls, and doubts the possibility of any final, perfect ascension. The spirit can achieve stability only on the plane of art. But art, as well as logic, aims at creating a vital illusion, although it creates that illusion without any practical end in view. It is the one pure, unhindered and free form of the intelligence. The artist alone has the right to believe in and respect the phantoms of his imagination, precisely because they are not used for any purpose, because they hide nothing,

they are not machines or masks, but real and true creatures. It is in this sense that Pirandello reconciles himself, through a profound historical synthesis, with the major tradition of Italian culture, that is, the primacy of art over all other activities of the human spirit. Pirandello does not affirm such primacy in the humanistic terms of Croce, nor in the aesthetic narcissism of d'Annunzio. He states it humbly, like the workman who sees himself subordinate to the beautiful work he has created with his own hands. The centre of his art is always its humanity. Unlike Ortega y Gasset, he never aimed at the "dehumanizing of art." The heroism and nobility of his life as an artist lie in his constant search for characters who are real people, not merely reflections of people. It was modesty, not pride, that prompted him to entitle his most famous work *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. In reality, he was an author who constantly sought new characters. And it is through them that he will acquire an immortality less ephemeral than that which he attained in his lifetime through his successes on the stage, the award of the Nobel Prize, or his membership in the Royal Academy of Italy.

The Ospedale Maggiore of Milan: Renaissance Architecture of Health

by

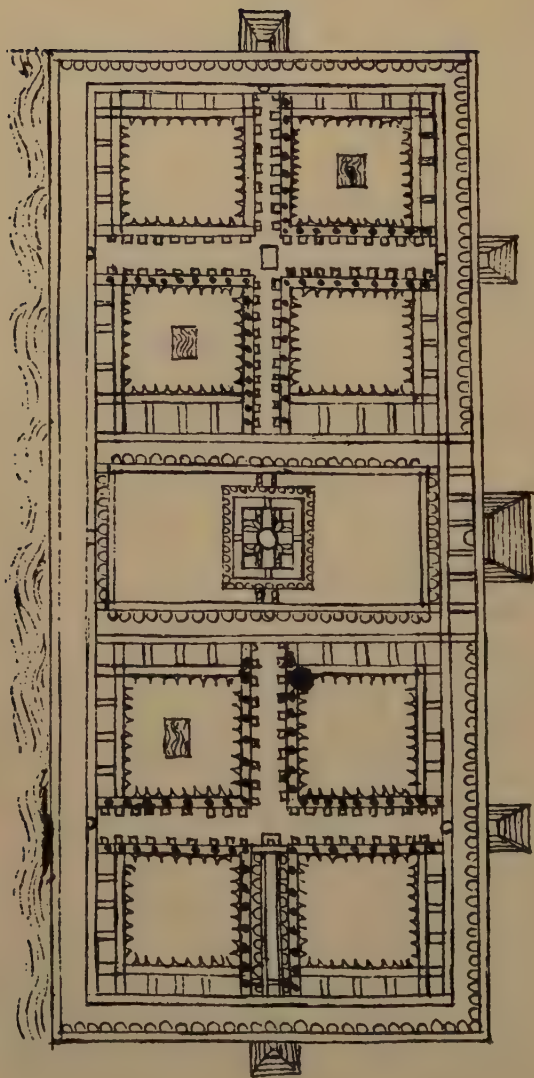
JOHN R. SPENCER

[Professor John R. Spencer teaches History of Art at Yale University. An "unabashed Italophile" by his own admission, he has been particularly interested in the Renaissance. The article which appears below deals with a little known aspect of Renaissance architecture, the architecture of health, which in modern times has assumed large proportions and whose roots, as for most things, can be traced to the Renaissance. He has published an edition, translation and annotation of Alberti's *On Painting*, and articles on Alberti, Filarete and Florentine art have appeared in the *Art Bulletin*, *Rivista d'Arte*, and in other reviews.]

Today hospitals are taken so much for granted that no one would consider calling one "the glorious shelter of God's poor" as did the Fifteenth-century architect of the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan. They simply exist for us. Far from calling a hospital "glorious" we too frequently think of them as cheerless places for patient or visitor — at least until the recent revolution in hospital design —, yet no one could deny that the staff of modern hospital feels an almost overwhelming compulsion toward cleanliness and curing. This is precisely what makes a hospital "glorious." At its origins the hospital served primarily as a place to shelter the sick or infirm poor while they awaited death. Light, air and cleanliness were unnecessary luxuries. Obviously a point must exist somewhere in the past when the hospital was first considered as a healthy and attractive place where the care and cure of the patient's body outweighed the speedy and, if possible, painless liberation of his soul. Quite naturally one would expect to find this turning point in the Renaissance at a time when there was a greater concern for this life, for the body and for the experimental sciences of which medicine was then becoming a part. This moment does, in fact, occur in the latter half of

the Fifteenth century when new hospitals were being built or existing ones re-organized in almost all the major Italian cities north of Rome. One can go even farther and trace all these new hospitals to one specific example, the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan. When this building was first constructed, it presented concepts of planning and organization that were startling innovations for its own time—innovations that were so modern that this hospital merits the title “glorious.”

The principal facts about the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan are fairly well known. Historically, it began to take form when a decision was made to consolidate a group of older and smaller hospitals under one roof. The person chiefly responsible for this consolidation is an otherwise unknown Fra Michele da Carcano. Antonio Averlino, called Filarete, a Florentine sculptor and architect, gave the plan and directed the beginning stages of the construction. The Duke and Duchess of Milan, Francesco and Bianca Maria Sforza, provided the funds. Francesco Sforza seems to have been governed in part by ulterior motives. He wished to reward the city which had so recently accepted him as its master with an imposing and suitable gift that would also counteract the menacing appearance of the Ducal fortress rising on the western approaches of the city. Thus within one year of his occupation of Milan plans were already afoot to obtain papal permission and dispensations for the new construction. Five years later, in 1456, Francesco Sforza anticipated the Pope's consent and issued a diploma of foundation. When a Papal Bull was received in 1458, work began in earnest and continued without interruption until Filarete's resignation in 1465. The parts begun under Filarete's direction were finished in the closing years of the century and the hospital remained less than one third completed until early in the Seventeenth century when further construction continued the original plan, however with grave modifications. The rapid growth of Milan in this century and the construction of new hospitals pushed the Ospedale Maggiore more and more into the background until it was finally abandoned as a hospital around 1940. The bombings of 1944 gave an excellent opportunity for much needed restoration and the revived building now forms a part of the University of Milan.



Plan of the Ospedale Maggiore from Filarete's treatise on architecture. Fol 82 v of ms. Magl. II, I, 140, Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence. (Foto Brogi).

In his design for the Ospedale Maggiore, Filarete created a plan which betrays its derivation from pre-existing types but which is essentially a new form. The plan for the hospital accompanying Filarete's treatise on architecture (See Fig.) indicates two squares containing crosses of equal arms separated by a rectangle one-half the width of one square. Basically this plan partakes of the preoccupation with geometry which permeates Renaissance thought and art, yet there is a genial disposition of the members both from the point of view of function and beauty that elevates this concept above the rather arid forms of pure geometry. To be sure, the cross form already existed in the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence but there the arms of the cross were unequal, they were not surrounded by porticoes and courtyards, and one cannot be certain that the final shape was not due to accidental accretions as new wings were added to the original edifice. Filarete "regularized" the older form and gave it a purpose for being. He sets his cross down within a hollow square and surrounds the smaller squares thus created with porticoes under which the patients can enjoy the sun and air and watch the play of the fountains originally planned for each smaller cloister. The four arms of the cross form the wards with an altar for religious services at their crossing while the surrounding square houses specialized wards, dispensaries, laundries and bake-shops. The patients are isolated from the outer world within a small and comfortable world of their own. Nor would the exterior have been forbidding. The warm color of the brick, the terra cotta decorations and the Angera stone of the arcades together with the broad open portico of the ground floor would have given the hospital a peaceful and welcoming appearance. It is rather typical of the Renaissance in general and of Filarete in particular that the artist should be concerned equally with functionalism and attractiveness, with the forms of the past and the needs of the present, and with the requirements of the individual and of his society. These are the concepts which governed the architect's thinking as he endeavored to harmonize his own design sense with the limitations and possibilities of the site, the financial restrictions imposed by the Duke and the de-

sires of the doctors. The building created in answer to these demands is both a new architectural form and a landmark in hospital design.

One of the outstanding features of Filarete's plan for the Ospedale Maggiore is its functional nature. The grid plan makes it possible to organize the services and functions of the hospital along rational grounds and to allot a suitable space to each. Thus the most necessary services are closest to the patients; the less necessary more removed. The architect's first concern was with a separation of the sexes, a concern that was not always of major importance in earlier construction. As planned, the square on the right as one faces the building was to be devoted solely to men while the women were to occupy the square on the left. The large rectangle between the two squares was to contain the hospital church and did not provide direct access from one square to the other. In the women's wing one notes a rather strange form filling the left arm of the cross. It is merely a further guarantee that women patients will be completely isolated. Filarete describes this form as a passage closed in by high iron grill work, entered only from the exterior and leading to a sort of grilled cage around the altar. Even when engaged in celebrating the mass, all males were denied direct access to the women patients. An isolation ward for contagious diseases is also indicated in the description, although there is no precise location of it on the plan. A series of private suites for gentlemen, however, is clearly provided on the second floor of the right hand square in the men's wing. Another section of the women's wing makes provisions for the receiving of foundlings by means of an ingenious turntable. The baby was placed on the table and the device rotated through one-half revolution thus protecting the child from physical and the mother from moral exposure. In a hospital of this size the architect had to use considerable ingenuity to house the staff and services. With the exception of the specialized wards for foundlings, gentlemen and contagious diseases, the majority of the patients occupied beds in the arms of the crosses. The clerics were assigned quarters in suites above the portico surrounding the hospital church. The ground floor along the façade was devoted

primarily to dispensaries, barber-shops and baths with the laundries, kitchens, bakeshops and mills toward the rear. The morgue was behind and under the church; the cemetery occupied the strip of land between the rear of the hospital and the canal. The remaining areas of the second floor around the perimeter of each square was apparently intended for staff. No space was wasted however, for the basement of the building was high enough above ground level to accomodate shops along the facade and hospital store-rooms under the remainder of the building. Although each wing is only some 300 feet square, the hospital began with 1000 beds and soon jumped to 3000 as compared to the maximum number of 1200 beds for the hospitals of S. Spirito in Rome and S. Maria Nuova in Florence, the two largest of the day. As demands on the hospital became more pressing in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries the exterior portico was walled up to provide more room for beds and a third story was added to the two Filarete had planned. Still, the original arrangement had been so carefully thought through that there are no complaints of overcrowding or of inefficient services to be found in the records of the hospital. Thanks to Filarete's ingenious planning the first truly modern hospital was flexible enough to permit expansion and functional enough to serve through four centuries.

The second major concern which sets the Ospedale Maggiore apart from earlier hospitals and brings it most closely to the modern era is the preoccupation with cleanliness. It is well known that modern concepts of personal and civic hygiene began in Fifteenth century Italy. A young Florentine could write from Budapest around 1460 that he bathed three times weekly in a vain attempt to rid himself of Hungarian fleas while a French king of the period could and did boast that he would bathe but three times in his life— at his birth, at his marriage and at his death. The streets of Florence were already paved and fairly well lighted in the Fifteenth century, while Shakespeare and his contemporaries almost two centuries later made frequent reference to the darkness, mud and filth of London. Filarete carried these same concerns of his contemporaries almost to the

point of an obsession; in fact, some have wished to see in him the first modern sanitary engineer. He begins his description of the Ospedale Maggiore with the stipulation that it must be convenient and clean. Fortunately, the site chosen for the new foundation made cleanliness no difficult matter. Filarete drew on his knowledge of Roman sanitation as he had observed it at Rome and as he had read of it in Latin treatises, but gave it a new and unique treatment. Behind the hospital there flowed a branch of the Naviglio — Milan's extensive system of canals. He diverted a part of this canal and sent it flowing through the building. A continuous flow of water through conduits in the wall or under the floor carried away all rubbish and detritus. In addition small pipes were set in the wall connecting the roof and the conduits. Their function is indicated by Filarete's name for his invention — spiracles—, for they served both to carry away rain water from the roof and as a modern breather pipe. To encourage personal cleanliness each patient had by his bed a small cupboard whose door let down to serve as a table or wash stand. When the door was opened, it uncovered a drain where water could be thrown away. Throughout the hospital water moved continually "washing and cleaning everything," as Filarete says so repeatedly. He assures the Duke, and we do not doubt his word, that there will be no occasion for the unpleasant odors which characterized earlier hospitals. Moving water, a free circulation of air and ample sunshine are Filarete's concerns for the patients. Some modern critics have asserted that the courts are too small to permit a satisfactory circulation of air, yet they are slightly more than ninety feet on a side. Even in winter the sun enters and one can be quite comfortable under the shelter of the porticoes. Within the major wards of the cross there was ample provision for light and air. The cross itself extended the full height of the second story. At each end of the cross large circular windows rose above the ground floor portico to admit light. Windows were pierced at the second story level along both sides of the arms of the cross and, at the crossing over the altar, the roof was raised on a drum again pierced by round windows to permit a greater flood of light. By modern

standards the wards may have been rather dark with all the light filtering down from above, yet it would have been adequate and it probably seemed rather brilliant in the Fifteenth century. A patient who knew the sunless, airless hospitals of the Middle Ages could count himself fortunate indeed to enter the bright, airy and clean hospital that Filarete had planned for the city of Milan.

It is only reasonable to demand why a hospital so modern in its organization and its concerns for the welfare of the patient did not have a greater effect on hospital planning. Its effect was actually quite profound, but it lies within a field not frequently studied by architectural historians. We know that in the Fifteenth century the hospitals at Pavia, Bergamo, Piacenza, Como and Genoa were all modelled after the Ospedale Maggiore of Milan. The government of Venice commissioned no less a personage than Bramante to copy the plans of the Milanese hospital for a similar foundation which they were unable to build for a lack of space. In the seventeenth century the hospitals of Turin and of the Femmes Incurables in Paris continued the organization of the Ospedale Maggiore and as late as 1781 we find the same plan occurring at Udine. Moreover, Filarete's plan need not necessarily be limited to hospitals. Although this area has not been studied fully as yet, the same organization could serve very well for a prison, a school, a monastery or a palace. It may be that the similarities in plan between the Ospedale Maggiore and Philip II's monastery-palace, the Escorial, are not accidental. At the same time we must realize that Filarete's plan was not completely carried out until early in the Seventeenth century. Although his ideas were available from manuscript copies of his treatise, the actual building did not exist in its totality until quite late. By this time a tradition which considered the hospital as an enlarged version of a private dwelling rather than as a unique structure demanding its own peculiar organization was too firmly rooted to be overturned. Even though the influence of the Ospedale Maggiore must remain restricted, this does not weaken the praise due to Filarete and to his patron Francesco Sforza for planning and initiating the construction of what may well be the first

modern hospital. From the point of view of cleanliness and convenience they had projected an ideal which was not fully realized until our own century. We are perhaps too well acquainted with our debt to the Italian Renaissance in the fields of art, literature and music, yet there is scarcely a facet of the life we take for granted today that does not have its origins in this vital and ebullient period. Milan's "glorious shelter of God's poor" is further evidence of this reliance on Renaissance Italy for the breadth and depth of our modern civilization.

Problems of Educational Policy in Italy

by

GUIDO CALOGERO

[Guido Calogero is a professor of philosophy at the University of Rome; however, his philosophical beliefs are not merely academic. He has defended them in the classroom as well as outside of it, and his daily life is a constant expression of them. Thus, along with his many works on ancient Greek philosophers and other significant contributions to philosophy, it should be recalled that he was a member of the Constituent Assembly whose duty it was to reorganize the Italian government along democratic lines, that he has been and is an important contributor to political thought and theory in Italy, that he was the director of the Institute of Italian Culture in London, and that he recently occupied the Chair of Italian Culture at the University of California at Berkeley.]

Education is, of course, of fundamental importance in Professor Calogero's thought. The views which he expresses in this article are those entertained by a great number of Italians who see clearly that the educational system, as it exists in Italy, is antiquated and inefficient. They are subjective views of an Italian looking at an Italian problem, and this is as it should be, for if Professor Calogero had attempted to consider the Italian system in relation to ours, we should have missed the very crux of the problem in Italy. Professor Calogero's views are strong and definite, and would not be readily acceptable to all; but they are carefully considered views which go to the root of the matter. His suggested solutions may or may not be applicable, but the problem is a basic one in Italy today, and Professor Calogero's statement of it is timely.]

To indicate briefly the desirable directions of an educational policy for Italy, it is necessary to concentrate on the absolutely basic problems. Each of them, in actual fact, may be broken down into a series of other questions, each of which would require, in order to be treated adequately and with concrete indications for legislative and adminis-

trative action, as much space as is available here for this entire essay. Still, it is necessary to agree provisionally on the essential lines of what is to be done, especially since the more one descends toward the particular, the more the concrete enactment of proposals can and must remain open to further discussion.

Altogether, educational policy in Italy presents three major classes of problems. The first is what might be called *political*, but what we prefer to call *constitutional*, because a policy for the schools can never be, in this sense, other than a defense of the nature and of the constitutional function of the educational system, as defined by the fundamental Charter of the Republic. The second is what we shall call *structural*: herein are included all the questions to be considered when one speaks of "school reform," that is, all the problems of reorganization and of modernization of an institution so indubitably antiquated as the Italian educational system. The third is *financial*, that is, the problem of finding the necessary funds both for the structural reforms just mentioned and for the general expansion of the educational system, which must become a cultural instrument for all and not remain a privilege for the few; or, in other words, the problem of the proportion of national revenue to be allocated annually for education.

A. *The Constitutional Problem.*

The articles of the Constitution concerning the educational system leave no doubt that also in Italy, as in the other more modern and progressive nations, the State assumes the responsibility of guaranteeing everyone an education up to a certain level and of guaranteeing it without racial, economic, political or religious distinctions. It is widely recognized that against this clear constitutional duty stand certain norms laid down by the Lateran Pacts, beginning with that which grants to the Catholic religion the privilege of being the State religion, and grants to its teaching the character of "foundation and culmination" of all instruction. Once the new constitutional precepts were in force, consistency would have required that the inoperancy

of whatever was contradictory in the Pacts be recognized—agreements, by the way, made between an authoritarian regime, fascism, and a power which has not yet repudiated the Syllabus of Errors, that is, the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, and despite the clear declarations of the most authoritative Christian-Democratic leaders before voting on article 7 of the Constitution, this has not occurred.

Consequently, in a more general sense, the policy, not only of every secular party but of every Italian citizen jealous of his Constitution and of the fundamental rights it guarantees to him and to everyone else, must be to insist that such a solemn declaration of inoperancy be made, or that, more radically, the very Lateran Pacts themselves be declared void, inasmuch as they involve, not only in the Concordat but also in the Treaty, prescriptions incompatible with the Italian Constitution and with the inalienable equality of rights which it guarantees to all citizens.

Until this comes about, however, it is clear that those responsible for Italian educational policy must, in defense of these rights, have recourse to a strict interpretation not only of the Constitutional text but also of the Lateran Pacts. Here the main problems are three: the teaching of religion, private schools, and the State examination.

1. *The teaching of religion.* An abundant crop of studies and documentations has shown, in the past few years, how the teaching of religion, a monopoly over which the Italian State has conceded to the Catholic Church through the Lateran Pacts, can no longer be called teaching, having been reduced to a mere indoctrination of religious principles and to a predetermined emotional restraint on the minds of the young through ritual ceremonies and acts of worship. Typical, in this regard, are the programs for the elementary schools, likewise emanating from the same educational authority of the Italian State. Added to this are all the other practical pressures which tend to humiliate and to intimidate, at the expense of filial affection, those families desirous of protecting their children from authoritative indoctrination and of guaranteeing to them the freedom of conscientious religious choice.

A policy for protection against such proceedings cannot, however, be limited to requesting that the religious ceremonies and acts of worship (religious chants, communal prayers, etc.) be eliminated from religious teaching. It must demand the strict application of article 36 of the Concordat, which lays down the conditions for such teaching. Indeed, if on the one hand the article reserves to the diocesan authority appointment and approval of those who may teach, on the other hand it prescribes that the nature of the programs be determined by agreement with the educational authority of the Italian State.

It would be enough, then, that the latter realize that no serious teaching of religion can neglect an historical analysis of its documents and a philosophical discussion of its presuppositions, nor can it be carried on without a continual and objective comparison of its beliefs with those of other religions, in order to achieve the authority, within the structure of the program of instruction, to demand a respect for such norms. It is easy to see what consequences this would entail. It might even happen that all religious teaching be suspended whenever the Church found itself unable to accept a lay interpretation of the structure of the curriculum. Still, all of this would merely constitute an interpretation of article 36 of the Concordat in the light of those principles of freedom to criticize and of objective respect for every reasonable point of view in discussion, principles which are the very substance of the Italian Constitution insofar as the existence of knowledge, of research, of culture and of education is concerned.

2. *Public school and private school.* Also, in relation to this problem the above mentioned constitutional principle remains fundamental; according to it, the State school, by its very nature open to all, must set at its foundation not a single doctrine (no matter how numerous those in the nation who say they accept it), but rather the spirit of understanding every possible doctrine, and of tolerance, even interest, for the critical discussion of every one of them. Hence the intrinsic priority of the State school, independent of individuals or vested interests, offers a great range of

possible ways to accomplish that task and at the same time to make sure that it is effectively accomplished.

This implies the conclusion that, although corporate groups and private individuals retain the freedom to establish other schools, and the young to attend them in preference to the State school, only the State school must receive without fail all that portion of the national revenue which Parliament decides from time to time to invest in education. As has already been explained with manifold and incontrovertible arguments, such is the obvious significance of that constitutional stricture expressed in article 33 with the well-known formula, "without burdens for the State."

In this regard, a serious educational policy can hardly avoid holding firmly to that strict interpretation of the prohibition and opposing any expedient that might be devised to circumvent it. The citizens of Italy should only pay taxes for their public schools and not for both public and private school as well. Let us reject the old argument that, in this case citizens who prefer to send their children to private school are placed in a position of inferiority, finding themselves obliged to pay for two schools, the public one by taxation and the private one out of the family budget. Indeed, if this private school were also financed by public money, anyone (speaking hypothetically) who found he liked neither the State school nor this financed private school, and who preferred another private school, not financed, would end up paying for no less than three schools. Every deviation from the principle, in short, results only in increasing the injustice, besides weakening a rule whose observance is of vital concern if one wants the young educated to be citizens of a free world and not merely to serve one church or one ideology or one party.

With the same rigidity of principle another problem must finally be considered: the criteria of authorization and recognition of the private schools on the part of the State. Without entering into detailed discussion of the various forms and regulations of what is called "parity" it will be sufficient here to reaffirm the criterion that whatever recognition the State confers upon a school, it must signify

that that school, in greater or lesser degree, meets not only the necessary requirements of organizational and technical-pedagogical efficiency, but also the requirements of remaining secular and non-denominational: vigilance in this regard is precisely the supreme duty of the State in the field of education. For instance, a school whose teaching staff were entirely composed of professed Catholics or of orthodox Marxists should never, on principle, receive recognition of "parity." To give another example (particularly significant, perhaps, despite the fact that it pertains to university instruction, while what is said here regards primarily the secondary school), recognition of the validity of its academic degrees should be withdrawn from the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan, until such time as it be established that at least some one of its teachers is not Catholic, or at least until it stops requiring from its students, as a necessary condition for graduation, the so-called "anti-modernist oath." In fact, a teacher or scholar who swears never to abandon certain theoretical convictions, whatever be the criticism to which later, on reflection, he may subject them, sets himself then and there outside the principle of steadfast sincerity with respect to his own conscience and with respect to the possibility that it may modify his attitude through the vicissitudes of experience and through the "dialogue" with other consciences, which is the secular and liberal foundation of every civilization and which also shapes our constitutional idea of education.

3. *The State Examination.* Until the time when the development of civilization and of civic responsibility allows also in Italy the realization of the ideal envisioned by Luigi Einaudi, to strip academic and professional titles of their legal value and to leave to the individuals and to each of the schools every possibility of asserting themselves in the struggle of competition, the most important public means for controlling the level of the national system of education must continue to be the State examination.

This does not mean, however, that structurally it must also continue to be something for the most part incongruous and inefficient, as it has been up to now. The very necessity of making it become a functional tool will require that it be

greatly modified. Meanwhile, however obvious it may be that every criticism and ironic comment about its present structure is directed towards showing how ridiculous its function is in most instances, still this must never be exploited as an argument for its abolition. On the other hand, one cannot refrain from exposing its inadequacies merely out of a fear that such denunciations play into the hands of those who would like to see the abolition of the State examination, in the hope that no other serious means will be substituted for controlling them. After all, the greatest danger to the survival of the State examination derives precisely from the fact that it functions so badly as to appear unsatisfactory to any reasonable person.

The problem of the reform of State examinations is clearly connected with that of the structural reform of the school system itself. Just as the school system is hopelessly antiquated as a tool of instruction, so too is the type of examination that attempts to judge its products. This also holds true, for the most part, for the State qualifying examinations for professions (*abilitazione professionale*) but it is particularly obvious of the matriculation examination (*esame di maturità*), which so little reflects what its name implies that by its standard no cultivated adult would be judged mature. Instead of ascertaining the acquired capabilities of the candidate by confronting him with certain problems, the solution of which he must demonstrate he can adduce even if he finds himself in that situation for the first time, he is passed simply if he is capable of repeating words or formulas learned by heart for that occasion. And they have the hardihood to call it an examination of "general culture."

In this connection, finally, there is also the problem of choosing the examining committees. There is good reason to lament the fact that they are often formed according to criteria of ideological or political partiality and that the best professors, for the most part, do not like to serve on them. This is entirely proper, just as it is proper to insist on a serious adherence to the rules prescribing that the examiner be from a different school than that of the student being examined, and that a serious set of competitive ex-

aminations remain the necessary means of entering into the teaching profession. But it is mistaken to maintain that with this we have considered all the problems, as when it is claimed that all school problems come down to problems of teaching personnel, and that an earnest compliance with the present system of competitive examinations would be sufficient, in the long run, to cure all evils. It remains a fact that many worthy university professors do not like, for instance, to preside over examining committees precisely because they have no desire to be involved in a pedagogical tragi-comedy of that sort; likewise, all the best young scholars consider it a misfortune to go and teach in secondary schools, as they would probably not, or at least much less, if teaching were freed from all the anti-pedagogical absurdities that contrive to make it as unpleasant for the teachers as for the students. This goes to show how even the problems of "personnel," whether referring to teachers or to examiners, are of necessity connected with problems of structural reform, as much in the field of teaching as in the qualifying examinations. Doubtless, a good school system cannot exist without good teachers; but few good teachers enter a bad school system.

B. The Structural Problem.

From all that has been said in the preceding section, our attention has already been directed to the fact that the problem of the school system in Italy will not be resolved merely by expansion of its present structure. Obviously, each of the types of school is inadequate, in the number of institutions, considering the nation's need, and almost every one of the institutions is inadequate for the number of individuals who should attend it; therefore, the expansion of this educational apparatus, so as to make it progressively more adequate, is, as we shall see, the prime problem of the Italian school system from the financial point of view. But to suppose that everything is solved simply by opening new schools and departments, and by producing new teachers, according to the formulas now in force and conforming to the methods pursued up to now, would be like believing that the only thing necessary to motorize Italy

more adequately would be to produce on the assembly line millions of those Fiats 501 they were driving thirty-five years ago.

Actually, the Italian system of education is thirty-five years old; and these are thirty-five years that count, because these years have seen (or should have seen) the transition from the old Italy, pre-fascist and fascist, to a democratic Italy. The school system is still characterized by that combination of conservatism and liberalism which was the reform devised by Gentile. Giovanni Gentile (preceded in this, however, by Croce himself) introduced a certain liberal element into the school system, substituting where he could classics for handbooks and favoring a certain atmosphere of critical discussion. But his general conception remained conservatively aristocratic. Just as the State school was to be a model school, designed to serve as an example and as a standard for the larger corps of private schools, so higher education, and with it the preparation for entrance into the ruling class of the nation, was to remain the privilege of a few, even if this privilege was not determined by the mere advantage of being well-born. And to these few a vaster army had to be subordinated, an army of technicians, producers, tradespeople, segregated from the real world of culture only because of "number," those merely *fruges consumere nati*, according to that harsh quotation chosen by Gentile.

Today such a conception is irrevocably outdated, even more than the Fiat 501. Above all, the Constitution itself, provided in article 34 that "obligatory and free" instruction is to be "given for at least eight years," establishes this instruction (even if inappropriately called *inferiore*) as the fundamental education of the young Italian, called upon in these eight years to develop as a man and as a citizen, independently of any ulterior professional specialization. But if the "eight years" are precise, the "at least" (which can therefore legitimately reappear in those programmatic schemes of orientation in which the Constitution abounds) would mark, with legal authority, the already obvious necessity not to exclude the fact that even Italy can, in not too long a time, reach that cultural standard now existing in

many other countries, according to which required and obligatory basic public education is advanced not only to the fourteenth but up to the eighteenth year of age, covering, that is, the entire span of what we call secondary school. (In the United States, where this level has practically been reached, one already foresees the time when basic education will also include "college education," that is, will be extended to the end of the first two years of what in Italy would be called "university.") In fact, a civilized country is not one in which there are workers, peasants and intellectuals, but rather one in which all are intellectuals, who then specialize productively in agriculture, mechanics, mathematics, poetry. A modern school system not only must not be conditioned by class distinctions, it must not even produce class distinctions. This is the structural pivot of every school system which is not backward.

2. *Basic education and professional preparation.* All of this points to the necessity for a radical revision of the way in which the relation between basic public education and professional preparation has always been conceived and formulated in the school system. In Italy this relationship is generally confused, on the one hand, with that between so-called humanistic education and so-called technical instruction, and on the other hand, with that between so-called general education and so-called specialization. All these things are "so-called" because none of them is in reality what it claims to be.

There are dilemmas from which we cannot escape. How could a humanistic education be truly humanistic if it were required to mould the man in the dentist and not in the dental technician? Either the training to use the fundamental benefits of culture is necessary even to educate a good worker, or it is useless even to educate a good university professor. Similarly, either "general education" consists in having a certain number of vague ideas on the most varied subjects so as not to cut a bad figure in the presence of people who have more or less the same vague ideas on the same subjects (and then it is possibly "general" but certainly not "education;" it is rather the mere ability to get along in a society more interested in feats of memory than in genuine intellec-

tual experiences), or else it is an actual ability to increase the joy of living by profiting from the inexhaustible benefits of art and knowledge, as well as by sharing civic life and by mutual cultivated understanding; and this, then, is the result of a training no less concrete, no less specific and indeed no less specialized than that which is necessary to become a radio technician or an anesthetist.

Every kind of specific training, moreover, is at the same time potentially "generic:" it is necessary culturally to train oneself to know how to profit from any work of art and to know how to confront any human situation, just as the anesthetist must train himself professionally to know how to meet any new difficulty in his field. In the same way, we may also explain how the myth of "general education" evolved; it is, in fact, the product of a confusion, according to which the necessary universality of education for utilizing cultural and social values has been considered as the essential nature of certain notions that ought to be known and therefore of certain subjects to be taught. Education to know how to live, enjoying beauty, and to know how to live together, enjoying the joy of others, is without doubt "more general" than training to know how to produce individual items and to carry on individual activities, because these can be chosen by one person differently from another, whereas all must acquire that first education if they want to live and live together socially. But it is not more general merely in the sense of being just another set of notions to be repeated, like those that must be repeated in an examination on a "special subject!" Indeed, instead of "social dialogue," the old school system has still as its ideal the conversation of the drawing room. Its structure must, therefore, be radically transformed if we wish to make it adequate not for a society of wigs and tonsures but for a modern democracy.

This does not mean, of course, that the old structures must all be transformed suddenly into new ones. It would be impossible, because the schools are composed basically of teachers, and habits and heads do not change overnight. Rather, new structures must arise alongside the old, in the sense that each new expansion of the system, which finances may permit, will be carried out by producing up-to-date

models and not merely by copying those of thirty-five years ago. Thus, by its very existence, the new will help to transform the old, even in all those cases in which rapid substitution would have been impractical. And this will also allow a greater possibility for improvement and correction in all those cases in which experience may demonstrate the need. In fact, no school reform can aspire to being modern, if it does not allow considerable flexibility for experimentation, the only means capable of preventing it from beginning to grow old even from the first day of its inception.

3. *Some structural reforms.* The many reforms of the organization of the school system, which will be required by the application of the above criteria, naturally cannot be listed here one by one. We can only indicate a few, purely for purposes of illustration.

The intermediate school, called "obligatory" inasmuch as the Constitution today prescribes that every Italian child attend it between the ages of 11 and 14, will have to be transformed in such a way that whatever specific preparation the young are able to acquire no limitations shall be imposed by the fact that some of them may be destined to pursue further studies and the others may pass instead directly into the professional world. In other words, the school will have to be rigorously uniform for everyone, not in the sense that its programs must be identical everywhere, but rather in the sense that whatever "professional preparation" it may be best to choose in the various localities and in the various institutions, according to the demands of the labor market, it will have to be acquired equally by those who begin to work after such schooling and by those who, instead, pursue further studies. It will serve the former who put it to immediate use, and the latter for whom it will be an important additional element in their civic and humane education, since it is not possible to work adequately on the higher levels in a community without having worked, one way or another, on the lower levels. Intermediate school, post-elementary school and pre-professional school will thus come to be united as a single school, which can and must, moreover, be both technical and humanistic, since the dilemma between the technician and the humanist will no longer

exist once the school program is stripped of all the encyclopedic doctrinairism that today weighs it down.

The same criteria will have to be followed, as far as possible, in the reorganization of the high intermediate school (*scuola media superiore*). The unfortunate normal school (*istituto magistrale*), in particular, will have to be abolished. The future elementary teachers will also have to go to the *liceo* and will not become teachers unless they spend two years in specialized study in psychology and pedagogy at the school of education (*facoltà di magistero*), which in turn will thus be able to cease being a useless and unfortunate carbon-copy of the school of letters (*facoltà di lettere*), and instead become (after, of course, and adequate transformation of its structure) the specific means for preparing nursery school and elementary school teachers and educational administrators. This raising of the level of teacher training will also be connected with a lessening of the discrepancy between the salaries of various teachers. This is sorely needed since university professors are paid on almost an American scale while some of their assistants, like many elementary teachers, work ten times more and are paid ten times less. In the contemporary world one cannot, in fact, call a country civilized in which the stipends of the highest government workers are, once the direct taxes are paid, more than triple those of lesser government workers.

All this, then, is directly connected with two fundamental requirements, the fulfilment of which concerns the entire structure of the Italian school system. The first is the liberalization of programs or plans of study, that is, the elimination of everything that undermines the initiative, and the real interest, of both teachers and students. The study plans should never be more than guides, and the professor in an intermediate school should have the same freedom in the choice of parts to emphasize which the university professor already has when not obsessed by the idea of "institutional courses." Similarly, in the universities students should have that same freedom of choice and of specialized concentration in their courses of study that has already been enjoyed for generations in all the best foreign universities. The system of examination will, consequently, have to be modernized;

it should strive more and more toward ascertaining the presence of demonstrated abilities independent of the particular subject matter of the courses of instruction, instead of the precarious memorization of set material. The urgency of these reforms, which at first might have seemed advisable only for history and the humanities, is, in fact, now more obvious in all fields, even in the field of scientific and technical education. The old encyclopedic doctrinairism, bolstered by the false distinction between general preparation and specialized preparation, reveals itself as pernicious in every field, and should be eliminated everywhere.

The other fundamental requirement concerns the relationship between the training of young people and the demands of the labor market. In fact, one of the most typical paradoxes of the Italian situation is, notoriously, that of the persistence of an enormous number of unemployed on the one hand, and on the other, of employees who seek a qualified supply of labor and do not find it. In that unified intermediate school of which we have spoken above, the factor of professional training should always be dealt with flexibly, in respect both to the situations contingent on local economic development and to the broader demands of the nation. Only by keeping in mind from the start this necessity for continuous relationship between the preparatory work of the school and the technical-productive needs of the country, shall we be able to embark on a progressive correction of the present absurd situation in which the universal goal is not preparation but the "piece of paper;" to cite one instance among many, each year thousands and thousands of Doctors of Law leave Italian universities, destined to carry on activities for which those studies, poorly completed, would be largely useless even if they had been completed properly. All of this, moreover, leads naturally to the last of the three major problems of the Italian school system, namely, finances: since the citizens of a nation cannot be expected to dedicate a substantial portion of their own income to their educational institutions if they do not consider them to be organically productive, as much for social progress as for the technical-economic progress of the community.

C. *The Financial Problem.*

On the whole, one can say that the tremendous increase in the portion of the national income invested in the educational process, necessary in order that Italy not remain too far behind other civilized countries is available from only three sources.

One is the productive and industrial force itself, which, in situations on a civic level where it is understood how important it is to have good technicians who are also good executives and administrators, and therefore, above all, good citizens and men educated to feel at home in life, is spontaneously interested in school problems, establishes alumni associations to support their own alma mater, or actually creates new educational institutions. And the fact that in Italy the development of private alongside public education presents peculiar constitutional problems (of which we have spoken in the first section of this essay,) absolutely must not lead to the discouraging of private capital investment in this field. If only the great Italian industrialists, instead of spending, in all, billions of lire to subsidize soccer teams, would spend billions of lire to subsidize schools and universities! The problem is not one of mistrust concerning such subsidies, but of the best way to channel them properly in regard, among other things, to the constitutional problems mentioned.

The second source could be composed of savings from other expenditures which the State itself makes, and which according to every modern constitution (including, naturally, the Italian) it should rather leave to the free choice of the citizens. Why, for example, are so many billions spent in Italy to build churches, when hundreds of thousands of classrooms are lacking even for the mere fulfilment of the requirements established by the Constitution? Is it possibly because God has need of lodgings or because the religious spirit needs special walls within which to assemble? If anyone should think so, he has also complete authority to act accordingly: but let him also pay for the churches he wants, as happens in every state that is truly and not hypocritically secular. We know very well that in the present Italian situation this is a rather remote political possibility. But the

complete integration of Negroes into the schools of all the Southern states in America is a rather remote prospect, and no one considers this a good reason for not talking about it.

The third and most important source of financing still remains the budget of the Ministry of Public Instruction, that is, the portion of taxes that the citizen is prepared to pay for schools. And here the low level of civic responsibility in Italy shows itself also when the problem is considered from a fiscal point of view. A people still defiant toward paying direct taxes at the high levels of the English and Americans, and on the other hand willing to burden the less fortunate classes with the major fiscal load through indirect taxation, is evidently still too barbarous to know how much a civilized nation must spend for education. As it gradually understands and increases the share of the national income invested in this field, proper adjustment of the school system will become possible. For the time being, teachers and instructors of the intermediate schools are considering strikes because of their wretched salaries, the university assistants are often paid less than the janitors, the State nursery school is almost nonexistent, the elementary and intermediate schools provide only part of what they should provide, according to the Constitution, as compulsory schooling for all, and illiteracy still lingers among millions and millions of Italians. It is unnecessary to give exact figures: everyone knows where to go and find them, if they wish. Or, more exactly, everyone knows where to go to find rough meaningful figures, the sort one deals with in the very general statistical surveys; but then, we do not even know how to find the money to carry out the research indispensable for the purpose of having the most up-to-date information on educational needs (on, for instance, the professional qualifications most in demand), despite the fact that the first necessary reforms are precisely those in statistics and social research, which would allow us to understand what we do not have and what we have need of.

Similarly, we are still incapable of solving the other great financial problem—actually offering to every young person the possibility of completing the entire course of studies corresponding to his capabilities, without, on the

one hand, his ending up in an inferior position because of impoverished origins, and without, on the other hand, the result that social differences among the various pursuits cause whoever does not reach the top of the pyramid to consider himself a failure. And here the problem is not merely the portion of the national income to be allocated for this purpose, since it could also be partially solved by a system of scholarships to be paid back after the beginning of a professional career, with a calculated probability not so different from that of many other insurance risks.

At all events, because of all these financial factors, a policy for education cannot, obviously, be totally self-sufficient. It depends, of necessity, on the operational policy of the Treasury and the whole national budget. Each concrete program can only be formulated on the basis of exact increases in the budget for the Ministry of Public Instruction, increases to be counted on; and only in relation to these can priorities of urgency also be established concerning the single issues of expenditure and the estimated plans for years ahead. The only thing we can say, in general, is that no one secular and democratic party should ever take upon itself the responsibility of executing or sharing or in any way supporting a governmental and legislative program which does not consider the school problem as one of the most urgent in Italian life and thus face up to the inevitable financial struggle. In fact, there are undoubtedly a great many school reforms that can be accomplished without expense, and it is naive to think that there are not. But, once this is said, it is then necessary to add quickly that the trial by fire for Italy lies in how much money it will be willing to spend in the next years and decades for the modernization and development of its educational system: that proportion of expenditures still remains the most typical index of the level of civilization of a country.

TRENDS



MUSIC 1957

Music in Italy —or at least the *performance* of music— has, inevitably, an official character. The opera houses, the orchestras, and even smaller musical organizations are all heavily subsidized; the Radio Italiana, the country's greatest and best purveyor of music, is a governmental institution, run virtually like a Ministry. These generous subsidies have a good side, and a bad one. On the one hand, Italy's musical life has a more stable quality than its American counterpart, where fund-raising and public relations take up as much time as preparing actual performances. On the other hand, the foreigner who examines annual programs of this country's leading orchestras and opera houses for the post-war years can't help noting a certain nationalism, which is not entirely healthy, and which is undoubtedly inspired by music's political backers here.

Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* was first performed in Zurich in 1938. A few weeks ago it was performed at La Scala — for the first time. In fact, this was the first time a Hindemith opera had been performed in that theatre. This delay would not, in itself, be so shocking (after all, *Mathis* received its first American performance only last year), if one could avoid comparing it with the promptness with which local composers are performed. Since 1946 five operas by Ildebrando Pizzetti have been performed at La Scala, and a sixth is being done this year. Pizzetti is the "old man" of Italian music — a kind of Italian Vaughan Williams; younger composers have a harder time (no opera by Luigi Dallapiccola has ever been mounted at La Scala), unless they have governmental support of some kind. And

governmental support explains the curious careers of a number of younger Italian composers who are widely performed here, but completely unheard of outside of Italy. When they *do* move outside the country, they are likely to get critical roastings, such as the Sicilian Franco Mannino received during his recent American tour as composer-conductor with the orchestra of Florence's *Maggio musicale*.

In general, however, Italian opera houses are to be praised for the variety of their repertory. The big three theatres (Milan, Rome, Naples) stage from fifteen to twenty operas during the winter season, eight or ten of them new productions, and several foreign works sung in the original language by imported companies (this is a post-war trend; until recently, Italians were used to translated works like *Tristano ed Isotta* and *I Maestri Cantori di Norimberga*). The subscriber at La Scala really gets his money's worth: this year, for example, in addition to *Mathis* (in Italian, exceptionally), he will hear a *Walküre* in German, directed and conducted by Karajan, *L'heure espagnole* and *l'Enfant et les sortilèges* in French, plus operas by Janáček, Dargomizky, and some usual repertory works — *l'Elisir d'Amore*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Butterfly*. In the spring, Maria Meneghini Callas will repeat her success of last season, Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*, and will appear in a revival of Bellini's rarely heard *Il Pirata*.

These revivals are the result of another Italian musical trend, accentuated since the end of the war. Italian opera houses, and especially the Florentine *Maggio musicale* festival, have been digging into archives and libraries to find neglected masterpieces of the 18th and 19th century opera repertory to vary the usual programs. The result of these investigations has been particularly happy. The Verdian year, 1951, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the composer's death by performing operas of his, neglected for a century or so: *Giovanna d'Arco*, *Ernani*, *Nabucco*, *Un Giorno di Regno*, *Macbeth* were dusted off, and proved well deserving of new attention. Most of them have been performed more than once in recent seasons. A few years later the *Maggio musicale* held a Rossini Festival, proving that works like *l'Assedio di Corinto* and *Il Conte Ory* could take their places in the

regular repertory. The rise of Mme. Callas's star has coincided with a re-discovery of Bellini, of whose operas she is certainly the ideal interpreter. After her success with *Norma*, she has triumphed in *I Puritani* and *La Sonnambula*. Her performance in Cherubini's *Medea* was unforgettable and unmistakably led to various revisions of long-held opinions about the "academic" nature of this composer, whose *Les Abencérages*, mounted at last year's *Maggio musicale*, confirmed the fact that Cherubini is a great *operista*, whose music has much to say to present-day audiences.

Speaking of music in Italy, it is natural to mention opera first, since that is the national preference, assuming at times the passionate importance that, say, the World Series has in America. Though Italian orchestras are followed by only a small segment of the public, they exist in the major cities and have regular symphonic concert series. In general the orchestras are inferior to those in England and America, and —with the addition of certain favored local composers, as mentioned above— the programs are similar: Brahms, Beethoven, *The Pines of Rome*, Berlioz and Mendelssohn overtures, Tschaikowsky *concerti*. When slightly more adventurous works are programmed, they are likely to be under-rehearsed and coldly received by the public, which is even more nationalistic in taste than the programming bureaucrats.

A welcome exception to the regular Brahms- Beethoven- Tschaikowsky programs is offered by the Radio Italiana and its brilliant Third Program, where in the same week the listener can hear everything from Torelli to Ives, operas by Busoni or Paisiello or Weber. Cycles of programs are given regularly, devoted to the *opera omnia* of a composer. Roman Vlad did an excellent series on Stravinsky, and Guido Turchi recently began one on Hindemith. The Radio's orchestras are the best in Italy (especially the Turin orchestra, formed and conducted regularly by Mario Rossi, one of the country's most cultivated musicians), and often they give public concerts.

Of course, all the big cities —and many of the smaller ones— have the usual concert series, featuring the familiar itinerant international artists: Rubinstein, Stern, Milstein,

Oistrakh. In recent years, a resurgence of interest in chamber music here has worked a gradual change in these concert seasons. One by one, a whole band of small groups has been formed; I Virtuosi di Roma, I Musici, la Società "Corelli," il Quintetto Boccherini, il Quartetto Italiano are the most famous (all have been to America), but there are many others. After reviving Vivaldi, they have turned to other composers of that period, and gradually the Italian public is becoming familiar with the works of Albinoni, Padre Martini, Galuppi, Leo, Hasse, and their contemporaries.

Instrumental chamber music led naturally to a revived interest in chamber opera, of which Milan's "Piccola Scala" is the most brilliant product. Since its inauguration a couple of seasons ago, it has offered excellent performances of operas by Cimarosa, Piccini, Scarlatti, Monteverdi, and others. Even earlier, Naples had given 18th-century chamber operas in the charming Teatro di Corte in the Royal Palace, but after one spectacular season, these productions had to be abandoned for lack of funds. Other small groups spring up from time to time; last year Renato Fasano, founder and conductor of I Virtuosi di Roma, put together a small troupe to perform Galuppi's charming *Il Filosofo di Campagna* (libretto by Goldoni). They toured Europe with great success for several months, and have subsequently recorded the work for Angel Records.

Though the quality of the *Maggio musicale* has, unfortunately, been declining in the past few years, the annual Venice Festival of Contemporary Music has maintained a high standard in the face of every kind of difficulty. Since the war they have presented world premieres of operas like Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* and Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, as well as the first stage performance of Prokofiev's *The Angel of Fire*. At the same time, the recently announced Festival of Two Worlds, sponsored by Gian Carlo Menotti, promises to become another internationalizing force in the Italian musical world. This Festival will be held in Spoleto, starting next June 5th, and will present new works by Italians and Americans, with international casts of young singers and dancers, under the guid-

ance of established American and Italian directors, conductors, and choreographers. Luchino Visconti, Raymond Rouleau, José Quintero, and Jerome Robbins have already promised to participate.

All in all, in the decade or so since the end of the war, the observer can discover a gradual improvement in the quality of music in Italy, and an increase of variety. About *quantity* there is no problem; this is a musical country — every third Italian seems to be born with a pleasant voice, and the traveler here finds himself literally surrounded by song. It is not hard to find music here; it is silence that is rare. After a while, though, the *americano italianizzato* no longer desires it.

WILLIAM WEAVER

DANTE SHELF: 1957

The year 1957, whatever else be its merits, political or literary, was an excellent year for Dante studies in America. No doubt the rhythm will accelerate as the centenary draws nearer; if so, looking back, we may see 1957 as the year of the rising curve. No less than five titles have come to my desk, all worthy of attention and illustrating in their variety the many mansions of Dante's house. For they include two translations, one of a work of the poet, another of the essays of one of his finest critics, a general introductory work, and two volumes of subtle and illuminating commentary.

Mr. Musa's translation of the *Vita Nuova* has been already reviewed in these pages (I, 3, pp. 82-84), so I shall add no comment here, save that I find his prose graceful and his translations of the lyrics more appealing than I had hoped, for I have a prejudice in favor of translating rhyme into rhyme. Of the remaining works I should like to say somewhat more.

Let me begin with the work of general nature, Domenico Vittorini's Dante (*The Age of Dante*, Syracuse University Press). In format it is a strikingly handsome book, beautifully printed and copiously illustrated by drawings which I confess are not always to my taste but do brighten the book. Vittorini offers in his work a survey of Dante's background intended primarily for those who are making their first acquaintance with the poet. Of the ten chapters in the book, seven deal with historical, cultural and literary matters of the 12th and 13th centuries, and only three with Dante's own works. This gives scope for remarks on the persistence or rediscovery of the classics, provençal poets and other literary fore-runners of Dante, theological and philosophical developments and the like. Professor Vittorini also brings in references to art, commerce and science in an effort to provide a complete picture of the culture

underlying the *Divine Comedy*. This is a laudable enterprise; there should be available a number of books of this general nature, particularly since the handbooks of Grandgent, Dinsmore and Toynbee are all out of print. But readers may not be entirely satisfied with Professor Vittorini's treatment. Eager to fit all he can into rather limited space, he has given us pages which read very often like a check list of names or brief notes for a lecture, almost a "cram" book. He has not given himself time to apply his *chiaroscuro* and it is hard to say, among the names and works cited, which are the truly important ones to study. The background chapters are an outline rather than a book. On Dante's own works and on his approach to the poet himself, Professor Vittorini is, in my opinion, too uncritical to be very useful. He does not paint his hero "warts and all" — yet warts Dante had and a portrait glossing them over is simply not a portrait. There are further a number of inaccuracies; Antheus for Antaeus (p. 127), not a serious matter and perhaps due to bad proofreading, as may also be Giacchino for Gioacchino; more serious is the mistranslation of *altrui* in Inf. II, 89 (p. 119), which provides the author with a quite unjustifiable view of Dante's concept of evil, and a similar inaccuracy in his translation of *spira* (*Purg.* XXIV, 53) (p. 92), though perhaps worse is the easy identification of *amore* with "the voices of their hearts." And Vittorini at various points seems to equate Blacks and Guelphs, Whites and Ghibellines; Dante was born he tells us "of an old and noble Black family," although he has but to glance at Compagni to know that Blacks and Whites were unheard of until long after Dante's birth.

Yet in spite of oversimplification and minor flaws, the little book will be useful, and I would like particularly to commend the arrangement of the Bibliography (but where are the recent works of Sayers and Whitfield?) and, what is most useful of all in a book bristling with names, a really good index.

In turning to the critical works, we may look first at the work of Professors Rossi and Galpin (*De Sanctis on Dante*. Essays edited and translated by Joseph Rossi and Alfred Galpin. University of Wisconsin Press), who have

englished for us De Sanctis' essays on Dante, and thereby done a very great service to English speaking readers of the *Comedy*. As the translators very well put it in their competent and unpretentious Introduction: "Among the many called to interpret the *Divine Comedy*, De Sanctis is surely one of the chosen few whose interpretations have proved worthy of the poem." And re-reading the essays one is struck again by the vigor and independence and perhaps even more by the clarity of the critical pronouncements. De Sanctis saw the poem in human terms, he was impatient with academic fads and esoteric fancies as applied to the *Comedy*, with preconceptions and prejudices that might stand between the reader and the text; if he is not so subtle as some critics he is, I think, more honest than most, if only because he loves not mysticism, nor history, nor the Church but quite simply Dante. Nor is his a blind love afraid to note the human faults in his hero. Professor Vittorini might well have pondered De Sanctis' comment on Cesare Balbo's life of the poet: "I see gradually emerging from these pages a figure of Dante all love and sweetness like a dove." But De Sanctis is sufficiently well known to readers of the *Quarterly* to need no further word here. As for the translation, I found it good, straightforward and faithful to the directness of the original. I wish the authors had not translated "fronte" of *Inf.* X, 35 as "front" when it means "forehead;" I don't know why they don't use the English form *Thais* for "*Taide*" and I think on page 51 their translation of "*geniale*" illustrates the mischief of deceptive cognates — but this is pedantic trifling on my part; I'm glad to have their book on my shelves.

Professor Bernard Stambler's book (*Dante's Other World*. The "Purgatorio" as Guide to the Divine Comedy. New York University Press), is the most ambitious and the most subtle we have yet discussed; it is a *canto* by *canto* — not quite line by line - exegesis of the *Purgatory*. Francis Fergusson undertook a like task a few years ago (our generation is apparently oriented more toward Purgatory than either of the other two realms), and it seems to me that of the two works, Professor Stambler's offers us the greater amount of substance. Professor Stambler's book is divided

into 14 chapters; the first, a lengthy one covering 90 pages and having 12 sub-divisions, is entitled "Environs of the *Commedia*," the last is a kind of summary, the 12 central chapters deal with the ascent of the mount, stage by stage. In the "Environs of the Comedy" the author covers the usual preliminaries to a study of Dante: the science, theology and literary tradition which nourish the work, the four-fold meaning and the like, and, inevitably in a work of our time, an exposition of "Allegory, Symbol, Analogy, Image," distinctions useful to one about to embark on the *selva oscura* of twentieth century exegesis. The meat of the book is of course in the central chapters. The only adequate review would require taking them up one by one, but our space does not permit of that. We shall have to do our best with what general characteristics seem apparent in Mr. Stambler's treatment, here and there picking out such specific passages as may seem appropriate.

Professor Stambler sees the *Purgatory* as a series of successive "epiphanies" or levels of increasing wisdom. One may hardly quarrel with this; his vocabulary is new but since Dante built his *Purgatory* on successive terraces the concept is certainly authentic. This succession of awarenesses or wisdoms, if I understand Mr. Stambler aright, has a triple aspect with reference to Dante's life, ideals, and poetry. Dwelling on the latter of these aspects, he sometimes makes the reader think of the ancient literary allegory of Benvenuto — so does the new return to the old. And he dwells with great detail on the relationship between Virgil and Dante, which he very properly sees as changing during the course of the ascent. And, again properly, he lingers for some time on "The Great Confessional," as he calls the meeting of Dante and Beatrice. In the course of his exposition, Professor Stambler has many original and perceptive things to say; he is alert, not only to imagery (who isn't in 1957?) but also to the human relations of the *Comedy*. Yet I would not put his book in the hands of one new to Dante. For in being original Professor Stambler is sometimes wilful, occasionally — to me, at least — obscure and at times even wrong. I shall try to illustrate what I mean.

First then, the author assumes an attitude of deprecation if not contempt for such traditional ideas as the equation of Virgil with Reason and Beatrice with Revelation. Such concepts are inadequate, he says, for these figures are characters no less than allegories. This is a little unfair to traditional interpreters; I doubt that anyone ever meant to say that Virgil was *only* Reason, but simply that on the allegorical level it is frequently helpful to think of him as typifying that quality. And I believe it is still true. Professor Stambler makes great play of Virgil's awkwardness in dealing with Cato (is it so awkward after all?) and says, in effect, a fine showing for a "reasonable" man! But in fact, allegorically, the poem gains if we see Reason floundering a little in a realm already the outpost of Revelation where Reason is not the final answer. Similarly the allegory of the dream in canto XIX, where the siren is unmasked by Virgil, makes good sense in the old allegorical terms of Grandgent; Professor Stambler's version by comparison seems to me wordy and confused.

Furthermore there are statements made by Professor Stambler that neither the old nor the new criticism could let pass without challenge. It is simply not true that Virgil says in XVII, 100-1 that "it is possible for the created to love the creator excessively;" Virgil's remark refers not to the "primo bene" but to the secondary good (of worldly things), as the context will show. Again, on the arrangement of sins in Hell, Professor Stambler notices that it "seems to move from those that affect the smallest number of persons to those that affect greater and greater numbers," which hardly squares with the topography of Hell, to say nothing of the poet's remark in *Inf.* III, 55-57. And yet again, *à propos* of the terrace of the avaricious, noting that both avarice and prodigality are equally culpable, Professor Stambler remarks that "this is one of the few instances in Purgatory where Dante uses the Aristotelian system in dealing with a specific sin," but this is hardly accurate. It is not "one of the few," it is the *only* instance (in spite of the general statement of Statius); it does however match the treatment of the same sin in the *Inferno* and calls for a much fuller gloss than Professor Stambler chooses to give it.

Some of my other reservations come under the heading of difference of opinion; I cannot myself conceive of Cato not being saved, not because of Virgil's reference to his shining vestments on the great day but simply because, Purgatory coming to an end with Judgment Day (a concept that haunts the poem), I cannot conceive of him going back to Limbo in virtue of the "law" (separating those destined for salvation from others) "that was made when he came forth." I have never considered Bonconte da Montefeltro a "whiner" and Professor Stambler does not persuade me that he is; when he applies the same term to the gentle Pia, the only soul in the *Purgatory* who thinks of Dante's need for restoration on his return, I am completely puzzled and my confidence in the author's interpretation of character is considerably shaken.

And I confess — it is probably my fault — that some of the author's theses, such as the latent fatherhood motif of the last *canti*, leave me unconvinced. Still there is much to be said for a fresh approach, and I read Professor Stambler's work with interest even though his somewhat tentative style — full of circumlocutions and ambiguous rhetorical questions — made the going at times a little rough.

In his preface, Professor Stambler deplores the widening rift between the "scholar" and the "critic" in the field of Dante studies, and whatever else may be said of his book it is certainly a noble effort to erase that frustrating frontier. The late Dorothy L. Sayers' *Further Papers on Dante* (New York, Harper and Brothers), may be regarded as a similar enterprise. Miss Sayers writes so well, with both lucidity and enthusiasm, that — in the present unhappy context which Professor Stambler deplores — it is hard to think of her as a scholar, and of course professionally speaking she wasn't. For all that, her essays here, while inspired by an almost missionary enthusiasm, are firmly documented and marked by the integrity we associate with the best sense of "scholarship." Of the eight essays in the present book — less substantial than her *Introductory Papers* perhaps — seven were prepared as lectures; this, in fairness to Miss Sayers, should be borne in mind as we read them. The first and longest appeared originally in *Essays presented to Charles*

Williams (1947). Entitled “. . . And telling you a story” it deals with Dante’s narrative art and reflects the author’s delight at her first contact with the poet. It is a splendid chapter and may serve as a supplement, and here and there perhaps as an antidote, to Eliot’s celebrated essay. Her chapter on Dante’s Virgil should please Professor Stambler as much as it pleases me; she too is unwilling to let the poet stand simply for Reason, but interprets his many facets in an illuminating fashion and with a sure touch. Her analysis of the Eighth Bolgia has all the vigor of De Sanctis and goes, I think, somewhat deeper; likewise her treatment of the Cornice of Sloth, accepting the conventional commentary, goes convincingly beyond it. The chapters “Dante and Milton” and “The Poetry of the Image in Dante and Charles Williams,” are pure literary essays and as such make very good reading. I have said elsewhere that Miss Sayers’ Dante as he emerges from her varied approaches seem to me a little too sectarian; my Dante at least is not quite such an effective apostle of Anglican Catholicism; but Miss Sayers’ Dante is certainly an authentic one and set forth with grace, stylistic dexterity and considerable erudition. Like all who love not only Dante but good writing, I mourn Miss Sayers’ passing; I hope that she was given time to finish her translation of the *Paradise*.

Although I have felt obliged to state what seems to me the inadequacies or even the errors — bearing in mind that I am probably at fault myself more often than not — in the books I have discussed, I would like to reaffirm that each of them in its own way is a work worthy of attention, together they are a rather imposing testimony to the vitality of Dante and the devotion of his disciples. Let us see what 1958 brings forth.

THOMAS G. BERGIN

BOOKS



THE PROMISED LAND

It has been evident for some time that if the ever-growing body of Italian modern literature in English translation were to become a significant and well rounded contribution, poetry would have to receive greater attention than it has in the past. It is with particular pleasure that one welcomes *The Promised Land and other Poems* (New York: S. F. Vanni, 1957), an anthology of selections from Umberto Saba, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Eugenio Montale, and Salvatore Quasimodo, edited by Sergio Pacifici. It should be added that Pacifici's example is quickly being followed and quite recently two more such volumes have been announced: *The Penguin Book of Italian Verse* (edited by George Kay) with prose translations, and Allen Mandelbaum's translation of Giuseppe Ungaretti's *Vita d'un uomo*. (See *ITEMS*).

Pacifici's book is well presented, with simple elegance and reassuring good taste. Equally happy is the choice of poems from each poet represented, and the translations, though somewhat uneven since they are due to the efforts of

many translators, are in general excellent. A Preface by Henri Peyre setting forth the significance of contemporary poetry is followed by a lengthy introduction by Professor Pacifici in which he traces the general development of modern Italian poetry and introduces each of the four poets.

Each of these four poets is firmly established in modern Italian letters and their works widely imitated and decisively influential represent the best of poetry in Italy in this century. The title for this collection is taken from a longer work of Giuseppe Ungaretti, still in progress, and which will eventually bear this title. The choice seems a happy one, for two reasons; first because Ungaretti is generally recognized as Italy's leading poet, and secondly because the content justifies the fulfillment of the title's implied promise.

Umberto Saba is represented by nine short selections among which some of his very best as *The Goat*, and *Woman*, in the excellent versions of Professor Bergin, and the delicate and evocative *To My Wife* rendered in English by Frederick M. Clapp with remarkable faith-

fulness to the original and with assured poetic mastery.

Ungaretti, a poet not easily rendered into English, is represented by eleven selections, the longest one taken from *The Promised Land*. This poet's elusive qualities and at times difficult style are well rendered in English and represent a definite achievement on the part of his translators.

Eugenio Montale is given the widest representation in respect to number and variety of selections. Notable are William Weaver's accurate and sensitive rendition of parts from *Cuttlefish Bones*, and Maurice English's translation from the *Occasional Poems*. Montale is undoubtedly the most "hermetic" of the four poets in this volume and some of the frequent "obscure" passages in the original Italian must have presented involved problems for the translator, which, one is happy to report, in almost all cases were solved with authority and poetic feeling.

The last of the poets included in the anthology, Salvatore Quasimodo, seems to have the most consistently good translations. Bernard Wall's rendition of *Letter to My Mother*, is superb in the delicate nuances and depth of feeling which reproduce so well the author's original text. Equally praiseworthy are the other translations of this author.

As in the case of all anthologies, different readers will have different opinions as to the individual selections from each

poet. On the whole, Professor Pacifici has been guided by sound criteria from the point of view of representativeness and of individual merit. *The Promised Land* will do a great deal to fill a lacuna that has existed for too long, and it is hoped that Professor Pacifici's efforts and discernment will inspire others to continue this work.

[C. L. G.]

THE BARON RAMPANT

Italo Calvino was twice in the limelight in 1957, first in the early spring, when he repudiated Communism, and then in the late summer when one of the Viareggio prizes crowned his *Barone rampante* (Einaudi: Turin 1957). Just as the second event was not without some political implications, so the first was followed by some interesting literary repercussions. Other Italian writers had left the Communist Party during the great outburst of indignation that followed the Hungarian Revolt, but none had built an allegorical and satirical story out of his personal experience, as Calvino did in his "Gran bonaccia delle Antille" (which appeared first in the review *Città aperta*, and then in the weekly *L'Espresso*, n. 34, 1957).

After this, one would have expected Calvino to continue to write in that satirical vein or to come back to the clear and blunt realism he had shown in the fine stories of *Ultimo venne il corvo*, or to the plain

buffoonery of *Il visconte dimezzato*. But something new and different came out, something unexpected, a novel which in our opinion is one of the best in contemporary Italian literature.

Il barone rampante is the story of a boy who, when scolded by his father, climbs up a tree and decides not to come down again. The villa of his father the Baron is in the middle of a wood; the action takes place on the Riviera towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the mountains of Liguria had not yet been cleared of their forests, and so from branch to branch the boy can roam through a vast territory at will. He literally lives in the trees, builds himself a comfortable hut, feeds on fruit and venison, yet he does not in the least behave like a savage. Just as he ingeniously succeeds in constructing an excellent shower beside a stream, so he gradually assembles a large library in his hut. Nor does he completely break off relations with his family and with society, but continues to take lessons from his old tutor, accompanies the family to mass (there is a branch of an elm-tree extending to a window of the cathedral), attends his dying mother and is knighted by his father's sword. Then he aids his fellow villagers against invading Moors from the sea and ravaging wolves from the mountains, protects his beloved woods from fires, grows fruit-trees, waters gardens and keeps bees.

There is practically nothing men can do with their feet on the ground that the Baron cannot do in the trees, even fight a duel. And, of course, love is not lacking. Among the exploits of the enterprising Baron, those of love are the most amusing, from his childhood when he falls in love with a little girl in a swing, to the time when he meets a company of Spanish exiles, and a beautiful princess falls in love with him.

The exiles themselves live in the trees, because the Genoese Republic, though unwilling to deny them the right of asylum, cannot defy the King of Spain by granting hospitality to his enemies on her soil. This is a brilliant expedient, and the description of the pompous ceremonies held in the trees by the impoverished nobles has a kind of humor and grace not unworthy of Cervantes.

The book is full of such inspirations, and indeed there is in it a picaresque flavor of which Italian narrative seemed to have lost even the memory. At every page there is a new and surprising adventure, as the aerial Baron never seems to stop meeting the strangest characters: brigands of all kinds, and even a scholarly one who allows himself to be captured through his love of reading, gypsies and poachers, pedlars and tramps, old hags and whores, French Republican soldiers, Austrian reactionary troops, even Napoleon in person. To tell the truth, at certain points, and especially towards

the end of the book, one distinctly feels that there is an excess of strange adventures, one has the impression that greater control over the imagination would have been profitable to the whole. But Calvino's imagination is inexhaustible, and as full of flashes and colors as fireworks. He allows it to roam at will, nimbly flying from an episode reminiscent of Boccaccio to an adventure surpassing those of the Baron von Münchhausen.

The picaresque tone certainly prevails in the novel, but there is, besides, especially at the beginning, a peculiar fairy-tale atmosphere. This reminds us not so much of Andersen and the Grimm brothers as of the rich treasure of Italian popular tales which Calvino himself collected two years ago for a children's book.

As for possible influences, Calvino was a young boy in 1932 when the Florence literary magazine *Solaria* published a tale by E. Terracini dealing with fabulous people living in trees (in present-day Italy), but this reader could not help noticing the coincidence. At that time an early novel by Vittorini was appearing monthly in *Solaria*, and it is quite possible that Calvino, while searching in later years for a rare work of a great master, stumbled on Terracini's tale.

In the opinion of some critics, the childish love between the rampant Cosimo (such is his name) and Viola derives from the celebrated episode of Carlino and Pisana in Nievo's

novel, and this too is possible. But we feel that Calvino's child-love story is perhaps closer to *Le Grand Meaulnes*. Viola's forbidden villa fascinates the love-stricken boy, much as the *Domaine* appeals to Alain Fournier's hero. There is the same poetic suggestion of an unworldly atmosphere, and even the park itself becomes a personification of love. There is no doubt that this is the best part of the book.

After such pleasant and refreshing reading, it is rather sad to come back to the dull problems of politics and sociology and to the angry complaints made by a former Marxist who cannot adjust himself to the bourgeois world. This is, in fact, the subject of Calvino's latest work, *La speculazione edilizia*, a longish tale published in the Fall issue of *Botteghe oscure* (1957). Perhaps the *Rampant Baron* was only a pleasant interlude in the career of a writer whose deep-rooted interests lie in the problems of contemporary society: he is as *engagé* now in his post-marxist phase as he was before repudiating Communism.

La speculazione edilizia is the story of the contractor, Caisotti, a newly rich workman, and his intrigues and frauds at the expense of the intellectual Quinto, an impoverished gentleman to whom he has promised to build a house on speculation. The story betrays the uncomfortable situation in which the intellectual Calvino finds himself after forsaking the Communist Party. Quinto

is a bourgeois who strives to place himself on the same level as the worker and even enters into a partnership with him but becomes his victim. On the other hand, he loathes the capitalist world with its dishonest speculations, and he does not find himself at ease either with the workers or with the bourgeois. Exactly like Calvino, who after escaping from Communism out of disgust for its opportunism, he does not know where to go since he still finds it everywhere. *La speculazione edilizia* describes this uncomfortable situation with a pedantic accuracy that burdens the tale, and with a bitter feeling of discouragement that cannot please. A far cry from the happy carefree gusto and limpid style of the *Baron!* There was no need for it, yet this is further evidence that *engagée* literature cannot reach the artistic level of a literature free from political servitude.

[FILIPPO DONINI]

NIEVO NOW IN ENGLISH

Ippolito Nievo's *Le confessioni d'un italiano*, more commonly known as *Le confessioni di un ottuagenario*, has now, a full century after its writing, appeared in English translation (*The Castle of Fratta*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958). A minor classic, the only one of the many historical novels which followed upon *I promessi sposi* to survive, it has always been particularly dear to the Italian public, hailed for its pulsating breath of youth and for its enthusiastic love of

country, characteristic of the Risorgimento, as earlier of the epic sweep of Napoleon's armies across Europe. The figure of Nievo, suffused with legendary glory and Romantic elements—his young life divided between poetry and action, his untimely, almost mysterious death, his unhappy love for his cousin Bice Melzi (the interpretation of which modern research has somewhat modified), the rapidity with which the 883 pages (in the Ricciardi edition of Nievo's *Opere*) were composed—has further surrounded the novel with a very special aura. But even aside from this aura, which emanates from extraneous biographical and historical considerations, an unmistakable, many-faceted charm overwhelms the reader as soon as he turns to the opening pages and steps into the kitchen of Fratta "which rose towards the heavens like a cupola and delved under the earth deeper than an abyss; obscure, even black, with a secular layer of soot, whence shone like so many huge diabolical eyes the shining bottoms of saucepans, dripping pans and flasks..." to meet, among a dozen other fully delineated characters, the Count and the Chancellor, Monsignor Orlando, Captain Sandracca and "a certain Martino, a former valet to the father of His Excellency, who was always pottering about the kitchen like an old hunting dog long retired, and wanting to poke his nose into cupboards and casseroles to the great des-

peration of the cook, always grumbling about the cats which got between his legs."

It was these opening pages that cast their spell upon Lovett F. Edwards when he first chanced upon the book while a prisoner of war in Italy and which induced him to carry out, during the next ten years, the by no means easy task of turning into English the highly idiomatic, wonderfully concrete, robust language of as consummate a stylist as Nievo. Expressions such as "*briciola com'era*" (Ricciardi, p. 33) to refer to the protagonist's extreme youth, "*Quel corpo già infermo e paludoso*" (R., p. 27) to refer to the decaying Venetian Republic, "*il pennello d'un pettegolo fiammingo*" (*Angelo di bontà*, p. 65) to refer to the love of detail of the Dutch painters of interiors, in which Nievo's writing, close to the soil and to reality ("Io scrivo per dir la verità," R., p. 46) and never "wrung out in the waters of the Arno," abounds, are indeed a challenge to the most expert translator.

Personal sympathy for Nievo then, rather than any scholarly or proselytizing intention, the sympathy of the average reader, not the well-documented inclination of the critic and professor, is responsible for the present translation. And this is as it should be, for *Le Confessioni* deserve to be read first of all as a tale, as the wonderful odyssey of a man and an epoch (the span of time covered runs from 1775 to 1855), as the ever recurring

growth of youth to old age, as the ever renewed reflections of a thinking man upon the vagaries of history, the tricks of fortune, the unfathomable and the fathomable qualities of human nature. In this sense Nievo's masterpiece takes its place beside the vast, energetic canvasses of the nineteenth-century novel, beside *War and Peace*, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, and *Vanity Fair*.

To speak of the translation proper, a few observations seem in order. As can be seen from the above quotation, Edwards has aimed at keeping as close to the flow of the original as possible. Nievo's sentences are long, allowing for abundant subordination of ideas, for parenthetical remarks, for modifications and distinctions of all kinds. Edwards almost never interferes with the sentence structure, though he has modified the paragraph divisions of the original. Sometimes this close adherence to the Italian makes for awkwardness in English, as on page 15, "... to go from Colloredo to Collalto ... two mettlesome and powerful horses sweated for three hours to drag any coach sufficiently well made to withstand the lurches due to the holes and rocks that it encountered." In general, however, the translation reads well and has maintained the leisurely tone as the richly colorful characterizations of the original, "The Chaplain of Fratta was a scared and pusillanimous little grasshopper who would have given the benediction with a kitchen

ladle had the Count had the whim to ask him to do so" (p. 23). The inevitable errors which beset translations due to misunderstanding of idioms, of historical or regional references, and of grammatical structures, crop up here too. Among grammatical errors are those which stem from failure to give tenses their correct value: "Ella sarebbe stata un bel pezzo senza batter becco," which refers to the future, is translated as though it referred to the past, "She must have been a considerable time without opening her mouth," (p. 388) and this error leads directly to a misreading of: "Buon per noi che ci lascerà in pace per tutto il resto della settimana!," translated as a hypothetical idea, "It will be a good thing for us if she only leaves us in peace for the rest of the week!," instead of as an affirmative statement, "It is lucky for us that she will leave us alone for the rest of the week!" Overlooking the function of the reflexive in Italian leads to a misreading such as the following: "It is certainly not necessary to fill his head with the conquest of Palestine" (p. 9) for "Certo non potrebbe mettersi in capo di conquistare la Palestina." A comparatively common idiomatic expression, "Stiamo nel seminato!" (p. 10) — Let's stick to the subject! — is rendered as, "Now we know where we are." Perhaps the most amusing error of all appears on page 11, where apropos of the long wait Orlando had to undergo before becom-

ing monsignor, we read, "The Count (Orlando's father) had the triumph of dying many years before the red flakes began to snow down upon his head." To solve the mystery of this unnatural phenomenon it is enough to turn to the original where one reads, "Il Conte ebbe la gloria di morire molti anni prima che i fiocchi rossi gli (to Orlando, that is) pioversero nel cappello," from which it becomes clear that "i fiocchi rossi" are the earmarks of the prelate's high office and have nothing to do with "fiocchi di neve." A similar mystery occurs on page 28, where "coda," the braided end of an eighteenth-century wig, is translated as "coat-tail" with the ensuing wonder of a fire starting at a coat-tail and spreading up to the top of a wig without even scorching the victim's back in the process! And finally, on page 25, "In fin di tavola si usava improvvisare qualche sonetto" — At the end of dinner it was usual to improvise poetry — is translated as, "At the end of the long tables some sonnet used to be improvised."

But these imperfections are not enough to mar the truly praiseworthy effort which finally makes available to the English reader the work of a man who has been compared to as different writers as Sterne and Manzoni, Heine and Foscolo, and who has recently been reread in the light of Proust's magnificent probing into the memory and the psyche.

[Olga Ragusa]

THE ITALIAN "PEOPLES" PARTY

When an American writes a fundamental historical analysis of one of the keystones for an understanding of contemporary Italy and it is published first in an Italian translation, this is news for both Americans and Italians. Edith Pratt Howard, under the aegis of Gaetano Salvemini, has written a history of the Partito Popolare Italiano that is a masterpiece of impartiality and a valuable source book for anyone wishing to have even an elementary knowledge of Government, Political Catholicism, Church-State Relations and the origins of fascism in Italy. It has appeared in the Collection Documenti della crisi contemporanea published by La nuova Italia, Editrice, Firenze, 1957, beautifully translated by Paolo Vittorelli, who has also appended a masterful introductory essay.

The Partito Popolare Italiano was the parent organization from which has sprung Italy's contemporary Christian Democracy. The theme of Miss Howard's volume is thus the biography of the first Italian Catholic Political Party, a descendent of the Catholic social, economic and political movement that was organized in the last decade of the XIX Century in Italy and known then as Christian Democracy. Its mouthpiece was Catholic Action and its media were the explosive currents of an officially non-political Catholic labor movement.

In the first hundred pages Miss Howard introduces the reader to the cultural environment of the new Italian unitary State, the bourgeois State that has successfully taken the city of Rome from the Papacy and which was consequently anathematized by the latter (formulation and attempted application of Pius IX's 'non expedit' which gave rise to the Roman Question) causing a social schism the results of which reach to our own day. The class society that was the electoral basis of that bourgeois State represented a limited number of Italians, monarch, aristocracy and propertied middlemen to which was attached a dissonant ecclesiastical structure. Originally the proletariat, whether urban or rural had no part in it.

In Italy, as in the rest of Europe, it was the Socialists who occupied themselves with organizing the urban workers into unions to improve their material existence and mould them into a massive political party with the sole object in mind of the eventual overthrow of the State. However, they neglected the peasantry, who comprise more than half of Italy's population and whose lot as a whole was a miserable one. The Pope's intransigence on the Roman Question had alienated the middle class, giving rise to Secularism, but did not hinder tacit arrangements between Clerical elements and the governing class, but one of its results was that the only field open to Christian social en-

deavor was that of the peasant class and it is there that the genesis of the Catholic political party to be, had its birth. The Church's reluctance over a long period to give formal approval to the formation of an independent Catholic party gave rise to a series of scandalous anomalies which the author treats with tact and taste. That the Party's founder and guiding genius has been a priest, Don Luigi Sturzo (seconded by the noted Catholic labor leader Achille Grandi), is one of the more fascinating aspects of this enthralling biography of a nation's conscience.

According to the Salvemini-Howard thesis (thoroughly and painstakingly documented by copious notes, bibliography of sources, direct and indirect, and bibliographical and nomenclature indices) the effect of Italy's entrance in the first World War, a participation that was repugnant to the majority of Italians, found the Vatican favoring an Italian government that it was formally dedicated to oppose. With this in mind Benedict XVI thought it convenient to divorce the radical Catholic social movement, headed by Don Luigi Sturzo, from Catholic Action which was directly under the control of the Pope and allow the formation of a Catholic Political Party, there being the hope that the clerical right might gain the ascendancy.

However, the Party was created on a revolutionary basis, essentially anti-middle-class in regard to the State into which

it was to insert itself for the purpose of Catholicizing it, conceived by its founder as independent of Clerical control, a free association of Catholic laymen, and by the Church as freeing herself from responsibility for the Catholic vote (abrogation of the 'non expedit'). Its program was based, among other things, upon a fight for proportional representation, radical agrarian reform and votes for women. Its anti-middle-class bias made it the authentic voice of rural Italy, but located it in the minds of its adversaries, lay and clerical, with Socialist subversion. These ingredients along with the social, economic and political ferments of the post war period were to prove too much for monarchy, aristocracy, propertied middle-class and a reactionary Pope in the person of Pius XI. Miss Howard, therefore, pivots the whole tragic occurrence of fascism around the rise of the Popular Party and its three-year existence in the political life of Italy.

The meteoric rise of the fascist party in 1919 was due to its own program and the support accorded to it by the Holy See. Its parliamentary strength was second only to the Socialists' thus forcing it to collaborate with the very elements it was desirous of supplanting, Liberals and the Democratic parties of the Center and Right, and so maintaining a central position in the national political struggle against the party's own ideology and, therefore,

allowing for no solution for the national problem. Thus the party's radicalism centered in a tragic dilemma, that of having as material objectives the selfsame ones as the Socialists, but being spiritually worlds apart from them. There was no possibility of collaboration with them on a political plane, even in a life and death struggle, first because it was unwanted by the Socialists until too late, and second because of their own Catholicity they were bound to the Holy See.

The author traces a maturing political consciousness of the Popular Party leaders, but blames them for succumbing to the blandishments of the right that they were dedicated to combat, yet clearly describes the pressure put upon them by the Vatican to do so. The other parties' collaboration with the illegal fascist tyranny is briefly commented upon in this book as an expression of the political immaturity of the Italian parliamentary system to deal with the vital problems that were affecting society and which led it to the social suicide that characterized the rise of fascism. This was the bourgeois reaction to the Popular Party and Socialist programs.

The abandonment of the Popular Party by the Holy See in favor of a conciliation with the fascist government is in the eyes of the author a proof of the Party's independence from Papal policies and modifies her strictures on the Party's mistaken action in join-

ing a coalition that was the death knell of liberty in Italy for a generation. Its subsequent martyrdom at the hands of the fascists and its contemporary resurrection as a dominant democratic party in Italy along with its Marxian opposition are a continual admonition for a fundamental return to its own radical sources.

[JOHN BRICCA]

UNDERSTANDING VITTORINI "WHOLE."

The recently published volume by Elio Vittorini, *Diario in pubblico* (Milan: Bompiani, 1957) is easily another indisputable proof of the vitality, intelligence and range of one of the foremost contemporary Italian men of letters. The book ranks with Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli* and Cesare Pavese's *La letteratura americana* ("Essays on American Literature," as yet untranslated) as one of the most intelligent and penetrating works to be issued in post-war Italy. It is a prime document to understand in depth the socio-political scene of today's Italy, as well as Vittorini's own poetics. In a larger sense, too, it is a history full of valuable observations on the cultural torment endured by a whole generation of Italians brought up under fascism.

The reader of this review has already sampled in the last issue some of the lyrical, "inventive" sections of the book in the elegantly faithful translation of Lowry Nelson, Jr. As

a result, his curiosity will have been greatly sharpened: he should now be content with nothing less than a thorough reading of the volume. Such reading is bound to be, I venture to predict, one of his most stimulating and rewarding adventures.

Little in *Diario in pubblico* is new in the strict sense of the word. With the exception of the editorial comments (written in May 1957) appended to many of the selections, all writing herein included have been published over the last twenty-eight years in various Italian and foreign periodicals. Thus, one of the chief attractions of this book is that it gathers for the first time many of the scattered and heretofore unavailable pieces, both critical and creative, by Vittorini. These pages, moreover, contribute substantially to presenting a sharper image than the other, woefully neglected side of this artist's complex personality: that of the critic, the vigorous social and political polemicist, the passionate and sharp raisonneur who comments upon a multitude of crucial issues of his, and any other modern generation. In so doing, the book makes an even stronger case for the importance of Vittorini's constant contributions to his culture through the multifarious activities in which he has always been engaged: as a creative writer, as a critic, as the indefatigable translator and commentator of American and English "classics," as the editor of the

short-lived (1945-47) left-wing publication *Il Politecnico* and, more recently, as the conceiver and editor of an interesting avant-garde series of novels ("I gettoni") by young Italian writers. Some day Vittorini may well be remembered not merely as the creator of such unforgettable works as *Conversazione in Sicilia* and *Uomini e no* but, with Ignazio Silone and Alberto Moravia, as one of the most dynamic cultural forces of post-war Italy. Thanks to the volume just issued, we may now begin reconstructing and evaluating the "whole" personality of its author.

Diario in pubblico is a kind of spiritual and intellectual autobiography, written without the usual concessions, retractions, revelations of a sensitive artist (say, Gide) who is writing his life for posterity. If the author has carefully "anthologized" his writings, he has not done so to present a distorted picture of himself, but solely to select those writings in which, as he puts it, he is still interested and retain, therefore, a certain amount of validity irrespective of when they were written. The editing is honest, straightforward, serious: Vittorini dislikes skirting an issue, no matter how unpopular his point of view may be. He is interested, rather, in presenting a documented history of his growth, as a man and an artist, and I believe it fulfills this task even when it presents views that may seem puzzling or contradictory.

The structure of the book is determined not by its subject matter, but by its chronology. It is therefore natural that the reader should feel a momentary lack of continuity when he discovers that the book is made up of excerpts of book reviews, notes, aphorisms, observations on politics, culture, society, religion, essays on American writers. Yet the book does have a certain coherence in that the image that emerges out of its pages is that of a man deeply committed to dramatize man's "situation" in our century but also to analyze in the historical (or, as Vittorini would say, the "cultural") context the problems of the world in which he lives. This project may take, as indeed it does here, many shapes and directions: but the ultimate goal remains the same. To understand the spirit that dictated *Diario in pubblico* we must go back to something Vittorini wrote in the early thirties: "We must think with our body." And he added, as a corollary: "Intellectualism means to think only with our mind." (pp. 49-50). Having chosen from the start his own position with respect to his elders and his contemporaries, Vittorini began laying the foundation for an education which, to be sane and civic, had to be formed outside the academies and the "official culture." In the thirties this meant writing in *Solaria* ("... I became *solariano*, and *solariano* was a word that, in the literary circles of those days, meant to be an anti-fascist, a

European, a universal man, an anti-traditionalist . . ."), writing in *Letteratura*, reading the English and American writers. To understand the world around him, and his and Man's position in it, became the guiding light for Vittorini and the symbol of a perennial quest, an insatiable thirst that no intellectual discovery could ever hope to quench.

When so viewed, it becomes clearer that this book, too, has its special themes and that its structure is determined not by arbitrary considerations but by the beginning and end of a certain phase of the author's life: "The literary reason;" "The anti-fascist reason;" "The cultural reason;" and, finally, "The civil reason." Each one of the book's divisions — I am tempted to say — has been immortalized in one or more works of fiction Vittorini has been writing over the same period: *Piccola borghesia*, *Il garofano rosso*, *Conversazione in Sicilia*, *Le donne di Messina* . . . From the early stage, Vittorini became increasingly concerned with those issues that obsess him even today: personal freedom, both political and artistic; the relation between life and literature; the impact of society and the ruling régime on man. As in a vast and complex symphony, these are the recurring themes, always clarified, enlarged, considered from a different vantage point. Gradually, as Vittorini has matured, his concepts have become more lucid and his perceptive intellect has eloquently stated that

art may never be conceived of as a means to edify the masses, or an instrument to propagandize a particular "political" view of society. Indeed, the author's own experience as the editor of *Il Politecnico* has brought him to a clearer vision of capitalistic society: Communism, he declares, has failed to live up to its mission. Speaking of those intellectuals that have become disillusioned with communist ideology, he writes that their (and perhaps his) delusion has not produced an ideological change but has filled them with historical bitterness.

With maturity, too, has come a less enthusiastic and more critical view of those writers (Caldwell, Cain, Saroyan) he once idolized; and the closing pages register a definite disappointment with the work of the young writers of America and Great Britain. They, too, have failed to live up to our old hopes.

The essays, notes, observations and reflections that are the very flesh and bones of *Diario in pubblico* seem to me to represent a kind of summa of what Vittorini is, ideologically and critically, today; but they are also the "other" means to communicate with his fellow men, to experiment with ideas, to test the validity of certain assumptions and eventually reach a better understanding of at least a measure of that Truth toward which every human being aspires. As one reaches the end of the volume one has the definite feeling that he has traveled all along in the com-

pany of a sensitive, "liberal" individual, who knows that while his goal may never be achieved because it lies beyond the possibilities of finite man, he must nevertheless continue — for his sake and for that of mankind. The journey is replete with obstacles of all sorts, and disappointments; and frustrations and enigmas. But it is a thrilling one, well worth our time and effort.

[SERGIO J. PACIFICI]

MICHELANGELO THE FLORENTINE

When one considers the reverence, admiration, and awe Michelangelo has inspired in all ages, it is somewhat surprising that only a handful of biographies have been written of him. The English reader has usually availed himself of the *Life of Michelangelo* written by J. A. Symonds, better known for his vast and comprehensive *Renaissance in Italy*.

A few months ago, Random House published a new type of biography of the great artist, for Sidney Alexander's *Michelangelo the Florentine* is a novel. "If I have chosen the novel as my vehicle" he writes "it is precisely because that form seemed most likely to evoke the only thing lacking in all the Michelangelo studies — the living presence of the man himself." Although the volume is not marked as such, it actually is the first part of a larger work, for it ends with the year 1505, and, as the reader knows,

Michelangelo lived until 1564. Indeed, we learn from a note on the inside of the jacket that the author is now working on a second novel covering the artist's later years.

Mr. Alexander's interest in the Italian Renaissance dates to his undergraduate days at Columbia University. It is evident from the first few pages of his novel, that he has done very extensive research in the period, and that he has studied with great care countless pages written about Michelangelo, from Ascanio Condivi's indispensable *Vita di Michelangelo*—published in 1553 and probably written under the direct supervision of the artist—to Giovanni Papini's *Vita di Michelangelo nella vita del suo tempo* (1949). Of great help, of course, must have been the numerous letters written to Michelangelo by various people, and the artist's own letters, most of which were addressed to the members of his immediate family.

Since the present work is a novel, and not a conventional biography, events are not recounted in a strictly chronological order. The novel begins, in fact, with Michelangelo's arrival in Rome in 1496, when he first went to the Eternal City to see Cardinal of San Giorgio who had purchased a Cupid which Michelangelo had made, artificially aged, and passed off as an ancient statue. In the second chapter the scene shifts to Florence, the City of the Red Lily, and covers the years 1493-1496. In chapter III the

reader is taken to Rome again, for a span of five years (1497-1501), and in the fourth and final chapter to Florence (1501-1505).

Although Mr. Alexander's book is a novel, it is strictly historical, and apart from an Andrea del Medigo, who is represented as one of Michelangelo's close friends, and, in part at least, as a model for David, all the other characters are taken from the history of the period: the Medici, Savonarola, Alexander VI, Charles VIII, Marsilio Ficino, Leonardo da Vinci, Pico della Mirandola, Politian, etc. The author tells his story from the "inside," as it were, and the narrative flows naturally and interestingly. It flows like life and history itself, and Mr. Alexander is able to capture the flavor of those turbulent and colorful days. Hence, there is no true fictional plot, even if a good portion of the novel revolves around the family of Andrea del Medigo: his stepfather Elia was a well-known physician and teacher, who early in Michelangelo's life, made it possible for him to witness the dissection of a cadaver. At times, Andrea is the real hero of the novel. He provides the author with the opportunity of depicting the plight of the Jews in Florence and Rome of the Renaissance: a rather sad plight, which, at times seems unduly stressed.

A few scenes ring scarcely plausible, even if possible, and one gets the impression of "piling on" for the sake of ef-

fect. It seems hardly believable, for instance, that as Michelangelo arrives in Rome, within a few minutes he sees: a litter from which a prostitute smiles enticingly at him; a troop of armed knights (the retinue of a cardinal) dashing madly by; bands of pilgrims from the four corners of the globe; through the open doors of Saint Peter's cathedral, the priest elevating the Host; a frenetic mob that prods along a half-nude prostitute who had violated the law and had sinned with a Moor, etc. But, in general, the author paints an accurate picture of the time. Especially striking is the portrayal of young Michelangelo who is shaping a Hercules of snow in a courtyard of the Medici Palace under the critical eyes of an audience who watches from a loggia; the arrival of Charles VIII; the persecution, trial, and execution of Savonarola—which is related in detail to Michelangelo by his brother Lionardo who had fled to Rome to escape the ensuing tribulations of Dominican friars; the planning and execution of the David from a discarded block of marble; and the perennial trials of the Magister Cerimoniarum, Johannes Burcardus, in deciding what to include and what to omit from his fascinating *Diarium romanum*.

Michelangelo's life in Rome, and especially with his family at home in Florence, is vividly represented. The artist himself is meticulously analyzed: with the sad awareness of his un-

gainliness and his broken nose, with his hopes and his fears. At times, I do not know how correctly, he is represented as a pusillanimous young man, who is afraid of brutality, and constantly fleeing physical dangers. But he is a real demon when he tackles a hard block of marble, and delivers powerful blows to remove the chips that hide the beautiful figure hidden within. The author has a real sympathy for the humanists and artists of the Medici circle. Leonardo, on the other hand, is represented as a dandy: a handsome artist-scientist-magician, whose suave voice, delicate hands and lacquered finger nails, pointed yellow shoes, and scented flowing beard, contrast with the awkward figure of shy, unkempt Michelangelo.

The novel ends with the description of the ceremonies and speeches in honor of the Florentine Amerigo Vespucci who has written his childhood friend Pietro Soderini about his discoveries in the New World. Michelangelo, who has witnessed the festivities, stops as night falls before the white giant David, high on a pedestal erected for it by Cronaca.

Unquestionably, Mr. Alexander paints a lively picture of the bustling, tormented, explosive, and highly creative Renaissance in Florence and Rome. In this, I feel, he was aided not only by his broad knowledge of the 15th and 16th centuries and by his intuition, but also by his long residence in Italy, for many of the characteristics

of the Italians and of the Italian life of those centuries are still observable in the Italians and the Italy of the present day. Even the colorful darting of swallows in the spring and summer months, which are so well captured and integrated with the landscape, are still there. But, speaking of birds and other winged animals, I wonder why Mr. Alexander, who intersperses Italian words with taste and discretion, decided to say that Giovansimone, one of Michelangelo's brothers, was "as flightly as a pipistrello." An appropriate comparison, to be sure, but I wonder how many of his readers know what a "pipistrello" is?

[C. S.]

A VIAREGGIO PRIZE

The 1957 Viareggio Prize for the "first published work" was awarded to F. Del Vecchio for his *La Chiesa di Canneto* (The Church of Canneto). In this work the author has tried to capture the essence of rural life in Southern Italy. Taking into consideration the historical immobility of the region with its remote hamlets, far from the great routes of communication, the author could do one of two things: either follow the example set by Rocco Scotellaro in his *Peasants of the South*, which consists of the biographies of several typical peasants chosen from all over the South; or, and this is what Del Vecchio chose to do, relate the human history of the rural South by condensing it into one

cycle of seasons in one village in the heart of the Abruzzi, where he spent his childhood and adolescence.

The book consists of three essays on rural life: "La Chiesa di Canneto," *the church*, which with its powerful, crumbling walls, is like a symbol of the peasant civilization which remains static through the centuries; "Il Paese," *the town*, the place where peasant and bourgeois meet, where those city-country relationships so important for an understanding of a part of Italian history are reproduced in miniature; and finally, "L'Annata," *the year*, in which the life of the peasants becomes identified with the fortunes of time and the seasons and is described in itself. Even if this monographic structure were all there was to the book, it would be a new contribution, though certainly not the most penetrating, to the Southern Question that has impassioned Italian political essayists from the "Sonnino Report" up to the recent contributions of Guido Dorso. What gives the book its own coherently literary character is the constant reference to the inner life of the writer. Even the subtlest change brought about in the author's mood by his intimate contact with this rural community is painstakingly described. The fortunes of the seasons and their influence on the life in the fields is reconstructed in the author's memory, animated and dramatized; and this creates the ambivalent character of this book which is

at once an essay on the peasants and an essay à la Montaigne on the author himself. It is an attempt on the author's part to find himself again and reconstruct his "self" through the memory of the life of the entire village. Hence, the book is written with a subtleness of style seldom found in the genre of the political essay to which the author would have it belong. We find several of the classic elements of that famous "literature of memory:" the water, the river, the church, the first image of death, and certain suggestive reconstructions of childhood that are true "sensations retrouvées." There is, for example, that of the priest appearing on the high river bank, his black robe fluttering in the wind; his words, drowned out by the sound of the torrent, as he calls to the boy; his voiceless gestures seeming like a curse; or that of the church beneath whose arches and broken columns the author's thoughts become suddenly clear and light. The two natures of the book, the one descriptive and documentary, the other actually autobiographic, bring about stylistically a continual shifting of images, by virtue of which the re-evocation of emotions gains its own depth through analogies drawn from nature, while facts and natural phenomena escape their destiny as "things" to become symbolic moments in the writer's life.

This ability to weld together the portrayal of his private life and that of the world he

describes, explains the lack of rhetoric in Del Vecchio's essays, and also the compatibility and coherence of language which are rather rare in a first book.

[DANTE DELLA TERZA]

ITALY AND THE ENGLISH ROMANTICS

The Cambridge University Press has published in the last few years a couple of praiseworthy studies which have to do with the culture of Italy in its English connections: after *Byron, Hobhouse and Foscolo*, by Professor E. R. Vincent (who later published a more general book on Foscolo), we have now a comprehensive work on the relationships between Italian culture and England during the first forty years of the nineteenth century. C. P. Brand's *Italy and the English Romantics* (Cambridge University Press, 1957) is the kind of book which to the ordinary reader, may appear to be simply a skilful compilation of informative data, but which turns out to be a delight to the person with a distinct interest in the subject. And the reasons for interest may be various, including "period" fascination on the one side, and, on the other, the equally strong fascination of discovering, dressed in the costumes of a past age, characters recognizably alive at all times.

There is, for instance, Felicia Hemans, who combines a capacity for Italianate melodrama of the type suggested

by a quotation from her *Vespers of Palermo* ("... he shall fail / To melt me into womanish feebleness. / *There* I still baffle him — the grave shall seal / My lips forever — mortal shall not hear / Montalba say 'forgive'!") with Romantic liberal sentiment, as when she prefaces her translations of *Patriotic Effusions of the Italian Poets*: "There is something very affecting in these vain, though exalted aspirations after that independence which the Italians, as a nation, seem destined never to regain." (pp. 194 and 203). Or, among the scholars, there is the Petrarchan and stubbornly Platonic Lord Woodhouselee: "Researches on Petrarch's life," Mr. Brand relates, "hastened the decline of his popularity. The Abbé de Sade had asserted that Laura was the wife of one of his ancestors, and that she was the mother of numerous children by him, and this view had been spread in England by Susannah Dobson's biography, which was published in 1775. To many of Petrarch's admirers this destroyed much of the beauty and purity of the poet's love, and they were quick to refute the suggestion. Lord Woodhouselee, in various works published between 1784 and 1810, endeavoured to show that the two pieces of evidence on which the Abbé based his assertions, were both forgeries. . . ." (p. 101). And there are the various types of *dilettanti*, as well as the allured tourist ("We fly to Italy: we eat the lotus: we can-

not tear ourselves away." *Westminster Review* of October 1826 quoted on p. 9) and, of course, the disgusted one: "The travelling here may be divided into three classes — plague, pestilence and famine. Plague — the mosquitoes. Pestilence — the smells, and famine — the dinners. . . ." (Lady Bulwer Lytton quoted on p. 173). Of the English residents in Italy, many "at once dismissed modern Italy as a land of barbarians and proceeded to recreate a miniature England. . ." (p. 14). But then there are also the loving, painstaking translators of Italian works, like William Stuart Rose, the serious students, the fair-minded politicians. On more or less all counts, literary, social, and political, among the English who went to Italy during the Romantic age, the one who emerges as the most intelligently acclimatized and generous is, of course, Lord Byron: "My lower apartments are full of their bayonets, fusils, cartridges and what-not. I suppose that they consider me as a depot to be sacrificed in case of accidents. It is no great matter, supposing that Italy could be liberated, who or what is sacrificed. It is a grand object — the very *poetry* of politics." (Quoted on p. 202).

Much material has been brought together in this book for the first time; the clarity and elegance of the presentation may make us overlook its abundance. The distribution is logical: Travel and Language; Literature; Arts and Land-

scape; History, Politics and Religion. The author tells us that his book was intended primarily as a literary study, but that "it soon became clear that the interest of our poets in Italian literature was intimately linked with that in the arts, music, history, politics and many other aspects of the Italian genius, and that not only the poets and scholars, but the artists, composers, historians, antiquarians and the educated classes generally were affected." (p. x). This widening of scope is welcome, also because the specifically literary aspects of the general problem of English interest in Italy during the Romantic age are perhaps already better known than others: such questions, I mean, as the reputation of Dante with the English Romantics, Byron's debt to Italian poets, or the Tasso legend. This, of course, does not exclude the desirability of new and closer looks at questions of that type: Mr. Brand, for example, speaking of Shelley's interest in Dante, does well in pointing not only to the usual "spiritual love" influences but also to poetic manner and metrics, to Shelley's evident attraction toward the Dantesque tercet and his particular use of it in the *Triumph of Life* and elsewhere.

On the English Romantics' attitude toward Italy in relation to politics, numbers of scattered studies existed already, as well as particular treatments by writers dealing for instance with the life of Byron and others. The present

study, by gathering much material together for the first time, puts even the major figures and the standard subjects into clearer perspective. I have found this to be particularly true of the section on the Italian exiles in England (p. 26 ff.) and that on the Catholic question (p. 215 ff.)

Mr. Brand's general purpose was that of illustrating what he refers to as the "Italianate fashion;" he maintains, and proves, that the fashion declined around 1840. I have no quarrel with his present definition, but I do wish he would continue, under whatever heading he may see fit, his useful and enlightening study into the latter part of the century. Within the history of English attitudes toward Italian life and culture during his limited period he documents such a diversity of attitudes, indeed such polar opposites, as to show that that history is an outstanding source of illustrations for the study of the exchange between national cultures in general, and of the workings of taste. Here are two such extremes: "The life of the Italian is little more than an animal one, and he is not much better than an ape endowed with speech." (Catherine Sinclair in her *Popish Legends*, quoted on p. 223). "We are all Italians, our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts, have their root in Italy." (*Fraser's Magazine*, quoted on p. 228). It is true that the second quotation is dated 1832 and the first is twenty years later, but I am very much

tempted to wonder whether they reflect simply two moments in the history of changing taste, or whether they do not rather exemplify the coexistence of opposites, the perennial contrasts, and the fascinating oddities, in the vision that people of one country take of the culture of another. In other words, this book seems to me far from being merely the history of a "fashion." For that matter, in more specific terms Mr. Brand himself does not minimize the significance of his subject: "Without this background of Italian culture," his conclusive phrase reads, "the English Romantic movement would hardly be recognizable today."

[P. M. P.]

MACHIAVELLI'S COMIC POTION

Great claims have been made for the originality and excellence of Machiavelli's "bitter comedy" *La mandragola*, now newly translated by Anne and Henry Paolucci (Liberal Arts Press: New York, 1957). On the face of it, that so severe and consistent a moralist should have devoted himself with such care to the trivial intrigue of Callimaco, seems, if not inexplicable, at least remarkable. It is perhaps less remarkable that so emphatic a polemist as Lord Macaulay should have delivered himself of the often quoted judgment that the *Mandragola* is "superior to the best of Goldoni and inferior only to the best of

Molière:" let the reader beware of the debater's device of easy parallel and contrast. Two moralists spurred by the fillip of daring meet across the centuries. It may be mere idle conjecture to speculate on Machiavelli's intentions. Yet one is tempted to ascribe his representation of a corrupt and disillusioning world, unmitigated by the presence of any particularly intelligent or moral character, to the moralist's desire to reform by shock. At all events, the reader or spectator must conclude that the primum mobile of the comedy is lust, and "abstract" lust at that, since Callimaco conceives his passion for Lucrezia first from a description of her beauty: the common "courtly" cliché of falling in love from description is thus transvalued in a most obvious way. The impulse of lust then generates fawning, apparently disinterested, subservience in the "parasite" Ligurio, the crass and foolish realization of the doddering husband Nicia's desire to have an heir, the worldly-wise amorality of Lucrezia's mother Sostрата, the abject corrupting greed of Fra Timoteo, and finally the new cynicism and awakened lust of Lucrezia. Behind the spectacle the dramatist seems to remain imperturbable, and the reader is left with the smile frozen on his face, a feeling of either self-disgust or sensual satisfaction, and a set of conjectures in mind.

Yet the skill and clarity with which the comedy is con-

structed provide an undeniable æsthetic satisfaction; the plot is fairly intricate and yet always clear and unwavering. If one avoids the danger of judging the play of a "hard" moralist from the point of view of a "soft" moralist, one may be permitted a rather serious criticism; that the play lacks any complex development of character. The only real change of heart occurs in Lucrezia who is cajoled into immorality by stupid and greedy persuaders and who finally capitulates wholly, with her conscience first affronted and then cynically self-appeased. What soliloquies there are serve not to reveal character but rather to explain and facilitate the plot, to make the obvious seem even more so. On the other hand, from the perspective of history, one should not tax the play too heavily. After all, the plot is quite an original fusion of Plautine and Boccacesque motives, and it could easily be proposed and defended as the best European comedy from Terence to the early Shakespeare, not that that is any guarantee of excellence. But when, within Italian literature, it comes to a comparison with Goldoni, the critic, leaving the moralist aside, must conclude that Goldoni's world is more complexly and plausibly realized: the intrigues of *La locandiera* could not so easily and never so faithfully be reduced to the proportions of a mere anecdote.

It seems not out of place, on the appearance of a new

American translation of the *Mandragola*, to attempt a general appraisal of the comedy, particularly since Mr. Paolucci, in his Introduction, makes the common claims of profundity and excellence for the play. At bottom, one may suspect that there exists a confusion between historical importance and novelty on the one hand, and "absolute" merit on the other. The stern literary critic ought not to let the absorbing fact that such a play should have been written at such a time by such an author obscure his literary values.

The Paolucci translation of the play may be awarded the palm of accuracy. Even the more intricate and baffling proverbial allusions have been rendered by corresponding equivalents in English. For the phrase "mi spicho mal volentieri da bomba" (drawn from such a contemporary game as *birri e ladri*, that is, cops and robbers), the Paoluccis' rendition is "Because I don't like to get tagged off base;" it gains in accuracy over the previous American version by Stark Young, which is a dead loss. Yet their solution raises the question, the whole question, of translation of this sort: how to render consistently the colloquial speech of past ages in a modern equivalent, and at the same time preserve decorum in the level of diction. Put in more general literary terms, the question might be posed, How and by what linguistic means is it possible in this day and

age to construct a "viable" stage speech, that is, a stage speech that is not monstrous and that gives promise of surviving with the authority of life? For Renaissance writers, especially dramatists, the problem seems almost insoluble: an archaic speech would only ring hollow; an expressive colloquial rendition would seem at once forced and, but little later, outmoded; an attempt at a "neutral" modern style would in the end be safest and best, though it would have to sacrifice accurate contemporary equivalents to Renaissance colloquial idiom. Take this passage, part of Fra Timoteo's soliloquy (Act III): "But I'll get at her on the matter of kindness. Women are all short on brains, anyway, and if one of them can tell you two things straight, it's something to

preach about, for among the blind one eye is enough to make a king." In the first place, the English proverb "In the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king" happens to be the literal translation of Machiavelli's text. But in general, surely something has to give, either diction or syntax or both. An actor would hardly find it possible to negotiate such a jumble of strata.

Only those who have struggled with the same problem can fully sympathize with the Paoluccis. That they have produced an "accurate" version of the *Mandragola* is a commendable accomplishment in itself. We must still look ahead into the indefinite future to figure forth the shape of an ideal version.

[L. N.]

ITEMS



EARLY LAST YEAR, the Associazione Italiana Fulbright was established as a means of continuing in Italy the experience of American culture which Italian holders of Fulbright grants had begun during their residence in America. Membership is also open to those Italians who have been invited by the American government to study in the United States and those who have received an advanced degree at some American institution of learning. Also, American Fulbright scholars may join, in keeping with the ideal of cultural exchange. The Associazione is meant to function mainly on a local basis, in various of the larger cities of Italy. Already an official twice-yearly publication has got under way; it is entitled simply *AIF*.

IN THE PENGUIN POET series one may now set the Italian volume beside the excellently conceived anthologies of Spanish, German and French (nineteenth-century) poetry, all of which appeared last year. *The Penguin Book of Italian Verse*, edited by George Kay, has just become available. Its

usefulness is enhanced by prose translations of the poems set more or less unobtrusively at the bottom of the page: after all, the famous Temple Classics edition of Dante, with Italian and English facing, has inducted many a reader into at least the precincts of a knowledge of Italian.

IT IS INSTRUCTIVE to note that Ippolito Nievo's novel, whose first appearance in English is reviewed elsewhere in this issue, was published in German last year (as *Pisana, oder die Bekenntnisse eines Achtzigjährigen*) for the very first time and has achieved a continuing success.

GOLDONI'S FARCE *Il servitore di due padroni* (The Servant of Two Masters), a rather early farce in full commedia dell'arte style, has just been presented in New York at the Davenport Theatre.

PENGUIN CLASSICS, already indispensable for the "general reader," has seemed neglectful of Italian literature. Among its for the most part excellent series of translations,

only the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* (in the late Dorothy Sayers' version) and Cellini's *Vita* have appeared. Now, rather unexpectedly and therefore refreshingly, a new volume has just appeared, a translation by R. S. Pine-Coffin of Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo*. It will be of particular interest to those who are aware of the vast importance of so-called courtesy books in the Renaissance. A new, fresh, properly modern translation of Castiglione becomes almost a moral obligation incumbent on the exemplary series.



BOOKS OF INTEREST to the Italophile and to the simple citizen of the world of letters continue to issue from the hands of publishers. James H. Meisel has written a study of Gaetano Mosca, entitled *The Myth of the Ruling Class: Gaetano Mosca and "The Elite,"* which includes a translation of the final edition of Mosca's *Theory of the Ruling Class* (University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 1958). Several new books on art are noteworthy: *Titian* by Dario Cecchi, translated by Nora Wydenbruck (Farrar, Straus and Cudahy: New York, 1957); *The Sculpture of Donatello* by H. W. Janson (Princeton UP, 1957; 2 volumes); and a reprint in Modern Library of the *Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, abridged from the translation of Edward MacCurdy. Among fiction translated during the last quarter, one may

cite Ugo Pirra's *The Camp Followers* (Dutton: New York, 1957) and Mario Soldati's *The Confession* (Knopf: New York, 1958). In poetry, apart from Sergio Pacifici's welcome anthology (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), one may mention Allen Mandelbaum's translation of Giuseppe Ungaretti's *Vita d'un uomo*. In music the most significant work is a translation from the French of Marc Pincherle's *Vivaldi, Genius of the Baroque* (Norton: New York, 1957). Finally, in sociology there is an earnest of continuing American interest in the welfare of Italy: Joseph LaPalombara's, *The Italian Labor Movement: Problems and Prospects* (Cornell UP: Ithaca, 1958).



ULDERICO ORLANDI'S collection of texts of opera librettos is now part of the holdings of the Istituto di Lettere, Musica e Teatro of the San Giorgio school of Venetian civilization. (Cini Foundation). The Orlandi collection is one of the most complete of its kind and perhaps the largest of all private collections assembled in this century. It consists of over 30,000 librettos for music, and 3,000 texts of operettas, dances, ballets, ballatas, etc. It contains 19,000 first editions. Highly prized is the section devoted to the 16th century. Of great significance for the history of the Italian theatre is the section of dramatic texts without musical score of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. It has

been announced that the collection — which goes through 1951 — will be kept up to date by the Institute.

PLANS ARE being drawn up for the Venice Film Festival which will take place, as usual, on the Lido between late August and early September. Although naturally the list of films to be presented will be published only around June or July, the general tendency of the Festival seems established. Again the so-called "restrictive formula" seems to have prevailed: careful selection of only twelve major productions of recognized artistic merits, with as little consideration as possible for industrial interests and pressures. Although this attitude has been known to create resentments and is, at any rate, difficult to maintain without causing controversy, it seems to have been recognized as the distinguishing trait of the Venice festival as compared to other film "exhibitions" in Europe and in South America. A distinguishing feature is also the severely "artistic" and independent quality of the prize committee, whose chairman last year was the French film director René Clair.

RICCARDO BACCHELLI'S new novel, which seems to be attracting as much attention as any work of fiction to appear in the new year, has to do with the assassination of Julius Caesar and the period of turmoil

that followed. It is published by Mondadori, who is also republishing earlier Bacchelli novels such as *Il diavolo al Pontelungo*. Again Bacchelli weaves imaginary events into historical reconstruction, as the title, *I tre schiavi di Giulio Cesare* ("The Three Slaves of Julius Caesar") suggests. The focus in the treatment of his time-honored theme is provided by the story of the three servants who, according, for instance, to a passage in Suetonius, are supposed to have taken care of Caesar's body, removing it from the Curia where it had been left all day after the assassination. In Suetonius the three slaves are nameless, Bacchelli gives them names, and forcefully different personalities, playing them against a background which he manages to make thoroughly alive historically and culturally. This is especially true of the most complex of the three figures, the one whom Bacchelli calls Lemula, an Alexandrian scholar, the most enlightened and articulate character in this unusual treatment of one of the most famous subjects in history.

GIACOMO CASANOVA, who has been recently the subject of a new and serious study by the Venetian historian and publicist Gino Damerini (*IQ*, I, 3, *Items*) may soon appear on the stage, and on an international scale. The prominent Italian actor Vittorio Gassman is working with the writer Giovanni

Comisso and with TV-writer Carlo Mazzarella on a very demanding project: nothing less than a dramatization of Casanova's *Memoirs*, which should then be presented on a world tour by an Italian company led by Gassman.

UGO BETTI'S fame as a playwright has increased consistently since his death four years ago and his dramas have been readily accessible both in volumes and on the stage. But until a few weeks ago it was literally impossible to secure a copy of his poetical works, which present a different facet of Betti's anguished scrutiny into man's soul and if not as important as his dramatic works certainly merit a more widespread public. Our thanks then to Cappelli Publishing house of Bologna which has just brought out a complete edition of Betti's poetry. This same firm had previously published the complete dramatic works of Betti.

THE THIRD and final volume of Bompiani's *Dizionario degli autori di tutti i tempi e di tutte le letterature* (Dictionary of the Authors of All Times and All Literatures) has appeared recently. This completes the monumental task undertaken about twenty years ago by Bompiani and which began to see the light in 1947 with the appearance of the first of ten volumes of the *Dizionario delle opere e dei personaggi di*

tutti i tempi e di tutte le letterature. (Dictionary of the Works and Characters of All Times and of All Literatures). We can think of no other works of reference in the world of letters of equal importance and usefulness.

WITH DEEP regret we note the death of Dorothy L. Sayers, Dante scholar, translator of the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, and author of authoritative essays on Dante. (See *Trends*). In her earlier years Miss Sayers had also become one of the best known writers of mystery stories, creating the character of Lord Peter Wimsey, the most learned and most affected of all detectives.

AFRO BALSADILLA known in art simply as Afro will spend six months at Mills College in Oakland California where he will work on a 10-by-20 feet mural for Paris' UNESCO Building. An exhibit of Afro's more recent works has been running in New York's Viviano Gallery.

THE *LIBERA STAMPA* Prize, awarded yearly in Italian Switzerland, went to Leonardo Sciascia for *Due storie italiane* (Two Italian Stories) for the year 1957.

LA *FIERA LETTERARIA* leading literary weekly published a front page article on the *Italian Quarterly* in its February 9, 1958 number.

THE YEAR 1957 has seen many a change in Italy. Perhaps one of the most important if lesser known of these changes, is the definite transition of Italy from an agricultural to an industrial nation. For the first time in its modern history, Italy in 1957 had more inhabitants employed in industry than in agriculture. Reports

from the Ministry of Labor show that as of November 1957, out of an employed population of 18,923,000 about 36.8 per cent (6,966,000 persons) were employed by industry, 36.4 per cent (6,314,000 persons) were employed in agriculture, and 29.8 per cent (5,643,000 persons) were engaged in other activities.

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This Italian grammar is, as its title implies, a basic textbook for beginners, designed to give the essentials of grammar and vocabulary. It makes no pretense to be a reference grammar, or even an overwhelmingly "complete" book, such as those to which instructors have usually been forced to turn. It does provide the solid foundation upon which the student can build in succeeding courses, and build with an encouraging sense of progress and accomplishment.

BASIC ITALIAN is made up of thirty-five language lessons and nine carefully prepared reviews. Each lesson follows a simple and practical teaching pattern: (1) Exposition of grammar; (2) lesson vocabulary; (3) *Lettura*—dramatic in form, dealing with a significant real-life situation; (4) substitution and completion drills, plus exercises in composition and conversation.

The type used is clear, large and attractive. Both stress and pronunciation are shown. Modern photographs of present-day Italy tie in directly with the text and a high-fidelity, ten-inch long playing record affords supplementary practice in the words and phrases necessary for "Getting Around" in Italian.

Professors Charles Speroni and Carlo L. Golino are with the University of California at Los Angeles — one of the largest and fastest growing departments of Italian in the country. Dr. Speroni is a Dante scholar, and greatly interested in the folklore of Italy (as well as that of his adopted California). Dr. Golino, who serves as chairman of the department, is a specialist in contemporary Italian literature.

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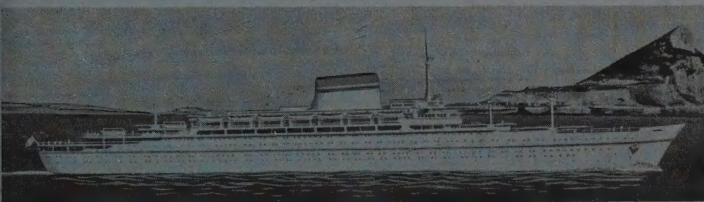
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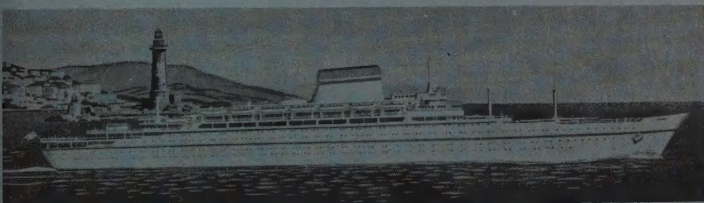
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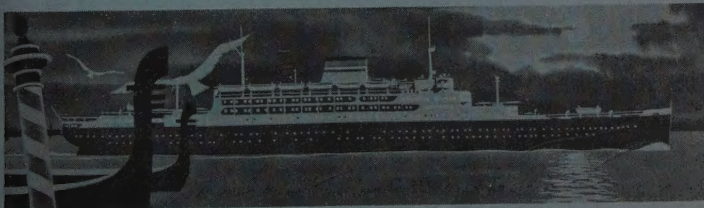
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